

THE PASTORAL AND CRITICAL-PROPHETIC
FUNCTIONS IN PARISH MINISTRY

A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology
at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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ABSTRACT

There is a tension between the pastoral and the critical-prophetic functions in contemporary parish ministry. The pastoral function presents the minister as the institutional representative to the local parish. This means that the minister is representing the institutional order and structure of the Church and society. The minister is seen as God's representative to the local parish for the purpose of creating and sustaining order and harmony in the Church and in society. The critical-prophetic function, on the other hand, presents the minister as God's representative to the Church and society for the purpose of changing or transforming institutional structures. The critical-prophetic function arises out of a specific historical and institutional problem situation to cause critical inspection of ecclesial, political, economic, and social structures. The minister who is called into both pastoral and critical-prophetic functions in a local parish ministry, therefore, is God's representative for institutional order and harmony and against that institutional order and harmony in light of specific historical events. This project addresses the tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic functions in contemporary parish ministry in a global perspective. My thesis proposes that contemporary parish ministry in a global perspective results in increased

tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic functions and that this tension must be understood and accepted as a necessary part of ministry by those within and outside the institutional Church. This project undertakes to propose a systems understanding of ministry informed by biblical, theological, and philosophical reflection. This systems approach to ministry seeks to explain the tension between pastoral and critical-prophetic functions in parish ministry. The object of the project is not to propose a systematic theology of ministry but to describe ministry as a functional system for dynamic problem solving. Initial entry into the subject comes in studying the emergence of critical prophecy in the Old Testament. This emergence process is seen to have a specific context composed of historical, institutional, and theological components. Then the unique theology of critical prophecy is examined with attention directed particularly to the wisdom tradition and to the subject of eschatology. This biblical material approaches the subject primarily from a form perspective, citing an appropriate precedent. Critical prophecy is defined as extraordinary theology which seeks to institute change. It comes into a tension with pastoral ministry which is defined as normal theology. Then the work of Reinhold Niebuhr on justice and world community is used to describe a dynamic interaction system which explains some of the complexities of the justice issue. This section approaches the subject from a conceptual basis, proposing Christian

life as a problem-solving existence. Next systems theory provides an appropriate value framework for understanding the current problem situation and the goals we seek as Christians. Evaluation of the significance of human existence is discussed in relation to sustainability, progress, and justice. Parish ministry is then defined as a dynamic problem-solving system. Both the formal and the conceptual understandings come together in this definition. Contemporary parish ministry which seeks a global perspective is shown to possess an intrinsic tension between its pastoral and the critical-prophetic functions. Finally, liturgical form is singled out for detailed exposition as an example of how the problem-solving system can be applied to practical ministry.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A Contemporary Challenge and Crisis in Parish Ministry

There is a tension between the pastoral and the critical-prophetic functions in contemporary parish ministry as it seeks a global perspective. The pastoral function presents the minister as the institutional representative to the local parish. This means that the minister is representing the institutional order and structure of the Church and society. The minister is seen as God's representative to the local parish for the purpose of creating and sustaining order and harmony in the Church and in society. The critical-prophetic function, on the other hand, presents the minister as God's representative to the Church and society for the purpose of changing or transforming institutional structures. A critical-prophetic ministry arises out of a specific historical and institutional problem situation to cause critical inspection of ecclesial, political, economic, and social structures. The minister who is called into both pastoral and critical-prophetic functions in a local parish ministry, therefore, is God's representative for institutional order and harmony and against that

institutional order and harmony in light of specific historical events. This project addresses the tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic functions in contemporary parish ministry in a global perspective.

In 1975, Philip Potter spoke these words concerning the survival of humanity in his report as General Secretary to the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Nairobi:

The proliferation of more lethal weapons of war; increasing world population; hunger, undernourishment, and famine; pollution of the human environment; the limits of natural resources; the gap between the rich and poor, between developed and underdeveloped countries; the energy crisis of the last two years—all these and more are threats to the survival of humanity, and they are interrelated. These are all global in their dimensions and demand global perspectives in dealing with them. We are all called to think, decide, and act globally and not out of national or sectional interest.¹

These words, and others concerning the contemporary need for a global perspective in Christian life and particularly in the Christian ministry, provide the point-of-departure for this project. Potter's statement immediately requires the full attention of those committed to the Christian way of life. Three questions are generated:

1. Am I part of the "We . . . all" who must respond?
2. Am I "called" to some new concept of discipleship?
3. Am I "to think, decide, and act globally" and what difference will that make in my Christian life?

The answers to these questions are not meant to be obvious or trivial. One's personal identity, calling, and

¹Philip Potter, "The Report of the General Secretary," in David M. Paton (ed.), Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975 (London: SPCK, 1976), p. 248.

lifestyle are too important to be decided by the decisions of others, no matter how authoritative those others may be. This project begins here because my answers to each question are "yes" and the changes which emerge from these responses require further reflection and examination. There are three significant factors involved in responding to challenges of such global dimensions.

First, our contemporary historical situation presents a global context for ministry which is full of contradictions to the Good News of Jesus Christ. There appear to be no shortages of political, economic, or social violence in the world today. Our international communications systems make it impossible to dispute this observation, providing timely news of the vast dimensions of human suffering and death from every inhabited area on Earth. In addition to this obvious human violence, our situation is complicated by evidence that the global community is consuming past the "carrying capacity" of our planet. Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute writes:

Four billion human beings with rising aspirations exert great pressure on biological systems, often exceeding nature's long-term carrying capacity. The productivity of scores of oceanic fisheries is falling as the catch exceeds their regenerative capacity. In a protein-hungry world, overfishing has recently become the rule, not the exception. Forests are shrinking before the onslaught of the firewood gatherers, the land-hungry farmer, and international timber interests. As the number of cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, and camels increases apace with human populations, the earth's grasslands are being overtaxed. Denudation, soil erosion, and desert encroachment result. Croplands, too, are under pressure. The

frontiers have largely disappeared. Fallow cycles everywhere are shortening, and farmers seeking land are being forced up steeply sloping hillsides and onto less fertile soils.²

International violence and extravagant consumption are currently threatening human life and, as Dr. Potter stated, these forces are interrelated. Our contemporary historical situation requires a response from the Christian community to this highly complex global crisis.

Second, contemporary ecclesial, political, economic, and social institutions have been, with few exceptions, either impotent or extremely sluggish in responding creatively to this global crisis. Many such institutions are completely unaware of any crisis existing today. Prof. C. Dean Freudenberger states: "The Church and the world are faced with problems today that, just a few years ago, we didn't even see, and now we have to make important decisions and we don't know how!"³ In light of this remarkable lack of dynamism, there is good reason to be critical of contemporary institutional structures. This critical analysis must address the global problem of the institution's inability to cope with the crisis situation. This inability to cope with the crisis of global violence and consumption exceeding the earth's carrying capacity is a threat to survival. Our contemporary institutional

²Lester Brown, The Twenty-Ninth Day (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 3.

³C. Dean Freudenberger, class lecture, Claremont, California, October 1978.

situation, rather than being dynamic and responsive to the global crisis, is part of the problem itself. There is a need, therefore, for immediate critical examination of institutional structures.

Third, our awareness of God's presence in human history allows hope to live on, even when hope seems unreasonable. The self-revelation of God gives knowledge which is not restricted by time or space, the parameters of human reason. The apostle Paul wrote concerning this new basis for hope:

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom. 8:38, 39 (RSV)

Such knowledge of God's dynamic presence creates hope which does not depend completely on human reason but, at the same time, is not exclusive from human reason. The self-revelation of God occurs in human history and finds expression in tradition and institutional structures but should not be understood as only a historical or institutional event. Our awareness of God's dynamic presence in human history calls for a response within the parameters of reason but equally calls for a response which is independent of reason as our sole basis for hope.

Combining these three factors in responding to the contemporary global challenge, there emerges a distinctive function in ministry—critical prophecy. This critical-

prophetic function can be seen to arise from the historical, institutional, and theological contexts of ministry in a global perspective. Leadership in this ministry can come from several directions: pastors, Church administrators, theologians, or the laity. In addition, concerned Christians and non-Christians outside the institutional Church can provide leadership in critical analysis of the Church and society. When historical and institutional situations require it, a critical-prophetic ministry will be developed to deal with the problems at hand by those who are convinced, theologically, of God's dynamic presence in human life. This project will deal with some specific problems introduced when the pastor provides the critical-prophetic ministry to the Church and society. There is a tension between pastoral and critical-prophetic functions in contemporary parish ministry because of the historical and institutional contexts of ministry and because the pastoral function in ministry presupposes the theological understanding of God's dynamic presence in human existence.

My thesis proposes that contemporary parish ministry in a global perspective results in increased tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic functions and that this tension must be understood and accepted as a necessary part of ministry by those within and outside the institutional Church.

Clarification of Issues

Before launching this thesis into deeper reflection, some definitions and clarifications are needed. Such clarifications will make later reflections and propositions reasonable by furnishing an interconnecting network of pre-suppositions and limitations.

First, several major terms must be defined for the purpose of this project.

Pastoral ministry: this term will be used to describe a particular function in ministry which is directed toward the support and nurture of existing structures of understanding and experience. It seeks to be supportive and understanding in response to the immediate parish setting and evaluative, interpretive, and probing in response to the global parish. Pastoral ministry emphasizes the acceptance and reconciliation persons experience with God through Jesus Christ as expressed in traditional faith. In announcing this message in the parish, the minister is experienced as God's representative to create and sustain order and harmony in the Church and society. Pastoral ministry is responsive to human needs and historical crises but can only respond within the existing structures of the institutional order. Here the minister is the guardian of the institutional change process.

Critical-prophetic ministry: this term will be used to describe a particular function in ministry which is directed toward critical evaluation and eventual destruction of the institutional order which threatens the survival of the Church and society. Critical-prophetic ministry emphasizes the judgment of God against injustice, the structures of injustice, and those who participate in sustaining them. In announcing this message in the parish, the minister is experienced as God's representative to radically change or transform existing institutional structures. Critical-prophetic ministry is responsive to human needs and historical crises but cannot respond appropriately within the existing structures of the institutional order. It, therefore, must affect a radical change of the institutional order before it can cope effectively with the

need or crisis. Here the minister is the critic of the institutional change process and seeks to re-structure the institution in accordance with the requirements of survival.

Historical context of reality: this term will be used to describe a specific context of reality which is solely synchronic. The historical context includes the total global situation at any specific time in history. The primary importance of this context of reality is for the description of functional interdependence within the global life system. In addition, this context provides the basis for short-run decision making in diverse areas of influence.⁴

Institutional context of reality: this term will be used to describe a specific context of reality which is solely diachronic. The institutional context includes only a specified institution or structure within a variable time frame. The primary importance of this context of reality is for the description of institutional dynamics over the passage of time. This context provides the basis for long-run decision making in influencing one particular institution.⁵

Theological context of reality: this term will be used to describe a specific context of reality which is neither synchronic nor diachronic. This theological context occurs at the intersection of the historical and institutional contexts. The primary importance of this context of reality is for the description of God's dynamic presence in the midst of history and institutional structures. This theological context is dependent on God's self-revelation with an identity and message which are not restricted by time or space. It provides the basis for both immediate and eternal decision making in influencing individuals and the ultimate system of life.⁶

⁴This is my expansion of material on true and false prophecy by James A. Sanders, "Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," in George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (eds.), Canon and Authority (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 21.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

Finally, the scope and limitations of this project must be discussed. I am interested for this project in parish ministry—not campus ministry or military chaplaincy or youth ministry or any other special interest ministry. Parish ministry involves a particular setting which includes a variety of functions and a variety of forms in ministry to a variety of ages, vocations, and interests. This project chooses to address these varieties rather than consistent functions, forms, and groups. This assumption limits the place of ministry.

More specifically, I address contemporary parish ministry. As I have stated, our contemporary historical situation defines a specific problem context for ministry which is unique in its vast dimensions and potential consequences. The present historical context for ministry demands our respect and attention as we reflect theologically on our institutional participation. This assumption limits the time of ministry.

In addition, I include only that contemporary parish ministry which actively seeks a global perspective in its reflections and decisions. Contemporary parish ministries, which do not seek a global perspective, operate on completely different values and decision processes than globally sensitive ministries. It is naive to expect parish ministries of such diverse perspectives to act similarly. For this reason, I restrict this project to the discussion of contemporary parish ministry seeking a

global perspective because only these situations will result in a tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic functions.

To summarize briefly, I assume responsibility for discussion of contemporary parish ministry seeking a global perspective because here the tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic ministries will be experienced. I have, therefore, described the place and time limitations of this project and specified the required reflective perspective of that place and time. Within this situation, I will propose an understanding of ministry which draws on biblical, theological, and philosophical reflection. This understanding of ministry, in turn, will suggest appropriate forms of ministry. I have chosen to discuss only one form of ministry, liturgical form, as an example of how this understanding translates into practical application in the parish setting.

Methodology and Chapter Outline

This project undertakes to propose a systems understanding of ministry informed by biblical, theological, and philosophical reflection. This systems approach to ministry seeks to explain the tension between pastoral and critical-prophetic functions in parish ministry. The object of the project is not to propose a systematic theology but to describe ministry as a functional system for dynamic

problem solving. Each area of reflection will be integrated into this system to show some specific opportunities and problems on contemporary parish ministry seeking a global perspective. This design, in addition, is not meant to be the only appropriate understanding of parish ministry. It is one possible system which has emerged from my contexts of ministry. My integration of biblical, theological, and philosophical reflection into a functional problem-solving system is the result of my life in the tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic functions in contemporary parish ministry. This project will be effective when the tension is recognized, accepted, and integrated as an essential characteristic of contemporary parish ministry.

Each chapter in this project has a specific purpose in the development of the functional system. Chapter 2 provides a basis for biblical reflection by seeking an understanding of critical prophecy in the Old Testament. Initial entry into the subject comes in studying the emergence of critical prophecy. This emergence process will be shown to have a distinctive historical, institutional, and theological context. Then the unique theology of critical prophecy can be examined. In discussing the theology of critical prophecy attention must be given to the Wisdom tradition and to the subject of eschatology. The biblical perspective of critical prophecy on the historical meaning of human existence yields some valuable contributions to the definition of parish ministry.

Chapter 3 provides a basis for theological reflection from the work of Reinhold Niebuhr on justice and world community. Four significant dialectics will be described which are especially appropriate for the contemporary problem situation. Then a dynamic interaction system will show the functional interdependence of each of the dialectics in a problem-solving method. Niebuhr's approach is particularly meaningful in proposing a firm theological understanding of ethical responsibility in an ever-expanding global community.

Chapter 4 provides a basis for philosophical reflection by applying systems thought to the theological view of historical existence. This discussion requires a definition of basic terminology in systems theory and its most significant presuppositions. Systems theory contributes greatly to the understanding of the problem situation in parish ministry by providing an appropriate value framework. Evaluation of the significance of human existence will be discussed in relation to sustainability, progress, and justice.

Chapter 5 presents an understanding of parish ministry as a dynamic problem-solving system. Drawing from the biblical, theological, and philosophical material in earlier chapters, both pastoral and critical-prophetic ministry will be defined in their individuality. Then the tension between them can be understood, accepted, and integrated into a pastoral/critical-prophetic ministry with a

dynamic problem-solving potential. This ministry can then be applied to the parish situation directly in various forms in ministry. Within this discussion, liturgical form will be singled out for detailed exposition as an example of how the problem-solving system can be applied to practical ministry.

Chapter 2

CRITICAL PROPHECY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

My intention in this chapter is not to provide an overview of prophecy in general or of critical prophecy more specifically. I seek to lift up those characteristics of critical prophecy in the biblical accounts which seem to have been responsible for conflict. My interest can be seen to fall into two areas: first, the emergence of critical prophecy and, second, the theology of critical prophecy. Within these areas, prophetic conflict can be discussed in its theological, institutional, and historical contexts, in its strategic application, and in its influence on Israelite theology. This understanding of critical prophecy and the conflict involved is the basis for my understanding of contemporary parish ministry as it seeks a global perspective.

In this chapter I propose an understanding of critical prophecy which emerged through a dialogue between my biblical and theological study and my background in the physical and social sciences. The work of Thomas S. Kuhn¹ has contributed significantly in this dialogue. Although Kuhn shows no interest in theology or critical prophecy,

¹Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

his material can be appropriated in significant areas for theological reflection. I do not view theology as a science in this presentation but see science as a participant in theology. This assumption allows the inclusion of scientific methodology into theology without in any way restricting theology within that methodology. The view that theology is the "queen of the sciences" seems to be increasingly appropriate as the world continues to suffer under academic and professional fragmentation. Before launching into critical prophecy, I feel it is necessary to present my theological presuppositions.

Theological Presuppositions

Critical prophecy should be understood to have emerged in a particular theological setting. Theology prior to the emergence of critical prophecy can be seen as "normal theology."² I propose this term as an extrapolation of Kuhn's terminology. "Normal theology" means study and reflection based firmly upon one or more past theological understandings, understandings that some particular theological community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice. Such understandings are recounted, but seldom in their original form, in theological "texts," which can be orally or literally

²This section was prepared with excerpts from Kuhn, *ibid.*, pp. 10-65. These excerpts have been used when appropriate with the terminology changed from scientific to theological.

transmitted. These "texts" expound the body of accepted order and law, illustrate many of their successful applications, and compare these applications with verifiable observations. Those theological understandings which serve for a time to define the legitimate problems and methods of a theological community for succeeding generations I will refer to as "paradigms." Paradigms operate in this way because they share two essential characteristics. Their understanding of human existence was sufficiently unprecedented to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of theological order. Simultaneously, it was sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the contemporary community to resolve. The study of the appropriate paradigm is what mainly prepares the student for membership in the particular theological community with which he/she will later practice. Because he/she learns from those who have articulated the paradigm, theological practice will seldom evoke overt disagreement over fundamentals. Those whose study and reflection are based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for theological practice. That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal theology, i.e., for the genesis and continuation of a particular theological tradition.

There may be a problem at this point with terminology. In its established usage, a paradigm is an accepted

model or pattern and that aspect of its meaning makes it appropriate for this discussion. The paradigm does not, however, function as a model or pattern for the purpose of replication of examples which could in principle replace it. Instead, like an accepted judicial decision in the common law, it is the object of further articulation and specification under new and more stringent conditions. Paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners have come to recognize as acute. Success here is not complete solution of a single problem or even partial solution of many problems. The success of a paradigm is at the start basically a promise of solution, realizable in selected and still incomplete examples. Normal theology consists in the fulfillment of that promise, a fulfillment through extending the knowledge of reality that the paradigm displays as particularly revealing, through increasing the extent of the match between that revealed reality and the paradigm's predictions, and through further articulation of the paradigm itself.

Few people who are not actually practicing theologians realize the enormity of this fulfilling process or the fascination that can be found in it. Most theologians spend their whole lives in this fulfilling process. They constitute what I am referring to here as normal theology. No part of the aim of normal theology is to call forth new modes of human existence; indeed those that will not fit

into the paradigmatic box are often not seen at all. Nor do theologians normally aim to propose new theologies, and they are often intolerant of those proposed by others. Instead, normal-theological study and reflection is directed to the articulation of those modes of existence and theologies that the paradigm already supplies. Normal theology possesses a built-in mechanism that ensures the flexibility of study whenever the paradigm ceases to function properly. At this point, theologians begin to behave quite differently, and the nature of their reflective method changes. In the interim, however, during the period when the paradigm is successful, the community will have solved problems that its members could scarcely have imagined and would never have undertaken without commitment to the paradigm. And at least part of that achievement proves to be permanent.

Normal theology then seems to be interested in three classes of reflection and study—determination of reality, matching of reality with theological understandings, and the articulation of these theological understandings. These do not, of course, quite exhaust the entire literature of theology. There are also extraordinary problems. But they emerge only on special occasions and only when normal theology has prepared the way. Inevitably, therefore, the overwhelming majority of questions undertaken by even the very best of theologians usually fall into one of the three categories above. Reflection under the paradigm can be conducted in no other way, and to desert the paradigm is to

cease practicing theology as it is defined.

One further point must be made concerning normal theology. Perhaps the most striking feature of normal theology is how little it aims to produce major novelties, conceptual or phenomenal. Failure in understanding reality is usually failure as a theologian. Then why are problems undertaken at all? Part of the answer has already been developed. To theologians, the results gained in normal theology are significant because they add to the scope and precision with which the paradigm can be applied. That answer, however, cannot account for the enthusiasm and devotion that theologians display for the problems of normal reflection. Bringing a normal theological problem to a conclusion is achieving the anticipated in a new way, and it requires the solution of all sorts of canonical, doctrinal, and conceptual puzzles. The person who succeeds is proved to be an expert puzzle-solver, and the challenge of the puzzle is an important part of the theologian's motivation.

The terms "puzzle" and "puzzle-solver" are important. Puzzles are, in the entirely standard meaning employed here, that special category of problems that can serve to test ingenuity or skill in solution. Dictionary illustrations are "jigsaw puzzle" and "crossword puzzle" and it is the characteristics that these share with the problems of normal theology that we now need to isolate. First, it is no criterion of goodness in a puzzle that its outcome be

intrinsically interesting or important. Consider the jigsaw puzzle whose pieces are selected at random from each of two different puzzle boxes. Since that problem is likely to defy even the most ingenious person, it cannot serve as a test of skill in solution. In any usual sense it is not a puzzle at all. Though intrinsic value is no criterion for a puzzle, the assured existence of a solution is. One of the things a theological community acquires with a paradigm is a criterion for choosing problems that, while the paradigm is taken for granted, can be assumed to have solutions. To a great extent these are the only problems that the community will admit as theologically relevant and worthwhile or encourage its members to undertake. A paradigm can insulate the community from those socially important problems that are not reducible to the puzzle form, because they cannot be stated in terms of the canonical and conceptual tools the paradigm supplies.

Second, to be classified as a puzzle, a problem must be characterized by more than an assured solution. There must also be rules that limit both the nature of acceptable solutions and the steps by which they are obtained. For instance, to solve a jigsaw puzzle, all the pieces must be used, their plain sides must be turned down, and they must be interlocked without forcing until no holes remain. Those are among the rules which govern the solution of jigsaw puzzles. Similar restrictions upon the admissible solutions of crossword puzzles, riddles, chess problems,

and so on, are readily discovered. If we can accept a considerably broadened use of the term "rule," one that will occasionally equate it with "established viewpoint" or with "preconception," then the problems accessible within a given theological tradition display something much like this set of puzzle characteristics. If the conditions governing solution are not met, no problem has been solved. And to change the rule would also change the paradigm, define a new puzzle, and not solve the old one.

Third, the theologian must be considered to understand the world and to extend the precision and scope with which it has been ordered. That commitment must, in turn, lead the theologian to scrutinize some specific aspect of reality in great detail. If that scrutiny displays pockets of apparent disorder, then these must challenge the theological community to a new refinement of observational perspectives or to a further articulation of the appropriate understanding.

The existence of this strong network of commitments—canonical, historical, conceptual, and institutional—is a principal source of the metaphor that relates normal theology to puzzle-solving. Normal theology is a highly determined activity, but it need not be entirely determined by rules. That is why I introduced shared paradigms rather than shared rules, assumptions, and points of view as the source of coherence for normal theology. Rules derive from

paradigms, but paradigms can guide research even in the absence of rules.

Normal theology, the puzzle-solving activity I have proposed, is a highly cumulative enterprise and is quite successful in its aim, the steady extension of the scope and precision of theological understanding of reality and human existence. Normal theology does not aim at novelties of fact or theory and, when successful, finds none. New and unsuspected events do, however, occur and radical new theological understandings must be developed. History even suggests that theology has developed a uniquely powerful method for redirecting its attention when faced with the unexpected. Theological reflection and study under a paradigm is a particularly effective way of inducing paradigm change. This paradigm change can be understood as a revolution or as a conversion. "Revolution" here is used to mean a change of perspective and acceptance of a different set of questions as the basis for decision making. I propose that revolution commences with the awareness of anomaly, i.e., with the recognition that nature and human experience has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal theology. It then continues with a more or less extended study of the area of anomaly. And it closes only when the paradigm understanding has been adjusted so that the anomalous has become the expected. Assimilating a new set of phenomenon demands a more than additive adjustment of the theological framework, and until

that adjustment is completed—until the theologian has learned to see nature and historical events in a different way—the new phenomenon is not a theological phenomenon at all.

One further point should be made. Anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm. The more precise and far-reaching that paradigm is, the more sensitive an indicator it provides of anomaly and hence of an occasion for paradigm change. In the normal mode of revolution, even resistance to change has a use. By ensuring that the paradigm will not be too easily surrendered, resistance guarantees that theologians will not be lightly distracted and that the anomalies that lead to paradigm change will penetrate existing understandings to the core. The very fact that a significant theological problem emerges simultaneously from several theological communities is an index to the strongly traditional nature of normal theology and to the completeness with which that traditional pursuit prepares the way for its own change.

This concluded my remarks on my theological pre-suppositions. I can now develop my discussion of critical prophecy within this framework and my philosophical understandings of the components of reality proposed earlier.

The Emergence of Critical Prophecy

My discussion of the emergence of critical prophecy should be understood to presuppose a period in Old Testament history in which critical prophecy did not exist. In describing an emergence, I recognize the necessity of setting the stage appropriately. Critical prophecy emerged in response to the demands of a specific and definable time and space. Critical prophecy emerged then in response to a challenging reality and this reality can be seen to have three basic components—the theological, institutional, and historical components of reality. In addition, this emergence should be seen as a response to a vacuum. The period of emergence then can be understood as a time of emptiness in some respect. Those who became "critical prophets" can be rightly understood as having been called or drawn into this vacuous situation, most responding quite against their own will. Once they had been drawn into a critical-prophetic existence, each then had to deal with his own identity and relationships in a radically different way.³ Prior to the period of emergence, there was no vacuum drawing individuals into critical prophecy. My discussion of the emergence of critical prophecy then is restricted to

³The use of the masculine gender throughout this chapter is not intended to signify an exclusive masculine membership in the vocation of critical prophecy; only that the biblical examples of critical prophecy in my discussion are exclusively masculine.

the specific situations of the vocations of specific Old Testament prophets. Those which I have chosen for this purpose are Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. These prophets of the pre-exilic period exhibit a special call and message which are particularly relevant to this discussion.⁴

Critical prophecy should be seen to have emerged in a particular theological setting. The theological component of reality can describe the intersection of the institutional and historical components of reality, of tradition and events, of time and space. Theology is interested in the interaction between diachronic identity and synchronic relationships. This theological component must always be described in terms of the institutional and historical components and has no meaning apart from them. It can be discussed in two appropriate categories—prior to the emergence and at the time of the emergence.

Prior to the eighth century B.C.E., theology in Israel operated as normal theology upon the paradigm that Israel's identity had been formed by Yahweh and would be sustained always by Yahweh. Gerhard von Rad states:

Israel came to realize that Yahweh had a definite plan for her, and that her ancestors had made a long journey with him during which Israel gradually obtained her identity. The realization—that Israel was not founded upon one single event, but that there was a long road, that is to say, a history, which led up to her formation

⁴Georg Fohrer and Ernest Sellin, Introduction to the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 346.

—is an epoch-making step. What we see here is not what we are accustomed to understand as history: the idea of history which Israel worked out was constructed exclusively on the basis of a sequence of acts which God laid down for her salvation.⁵

This understanding of Israel's identity fits the definitions proposed for a paradigm. It provides an unprecedented view of human existence which could attract adherents from competing modes of theological order. And it is sufficiently open-ended to leave problems for the contemporary community to resolve. The understanding of Yahweh as the creator and sustainer of Israel's identity was verifiable in the traditional stories of Yahweh's acts in historical events. This paradigm at the start provided a promise of solution to the basic need for reality maintenance. Normal theology here is involved in the identity of Israel which is a social process. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann provide an appropriate explanation:

The reality of everyday life maintains itself by being embodied in routines, which is the essence of institutionalization. Beyond this, however, the reality of everyday life is ongoingly reaffirmed in the individual's interaction with others. Just as reality is originally internalized by a social process, so it is maintained in consciousness by social processes.⁶

It is my understanding that Israel's identity survived prior to the eighth century B.C.E. because Israel saw Yahweh in a social dimension. Here Yahweh was experienced as having a

⁵Gerhard von Rad, Message of the Prophets (London: S.C.M. Press, 1965), p. 83.

⁶Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 137.

special relationship with Israel and this relationship was effective in constantly reaffirming Israel's identity. In addition, Israel incorporated this relationship into daily life. The various law codes established routines which maintained reality in everyday life. The institution of the cult was developed around these routines.

The paradigm provided a promise to Israel that this identity would survive. Normal theology consisted of the fulfillment through extending the knowledge of reality that the paradigm displays as particularly revealing, through increasing the extent of the match between that revealed reality and the paradigm's predictions, and through further articulation of the paradigm itself. The cultic institution then was interested in knowing about all reality from the paradigmatic perspective. It was also interested in increasing the accuracy of the paradigm's predictions. Finally, it was interested in providing a more precise explanation and expression of the paradigm itself. Normal theology was done by the cultic institution there. I propose that within that cultic institution there were three "offices" or vocations involved in normal theology. The "wise" did research and investigation concerning the knowledge of reality from the paradigmatic perspective. The "cult prophets" developed the paradigm's predictive potential. And the "priests" dealt with further articulation of the paradigm itself. This scheme is, of course, not meant to overly compartmentalize these various

activities. There does seem to be a natural correlation, however, between the processes of normal theology and the traditional job descriptions of cultic offices in Israel. The paradigm then provided a promise and normal theology sought to provide the fulfillment of that promise.

The paradigm that Israel's identity had been formed and would be sustained by Yahweh produced a sense of awe and mystery for the people of Israel. This mystery produced a normal theology with great dedication and energy. The paradigm is a puzzle. The cultic institution was involved in plumbing the depths of that mystery, in solving the puzzle. Implicit in this activity is the belief in the existence of a solution. The wise, the cult prophets, and the priests, I propose, believed wholeheartedly that Israel's identity had been created by Yahweh and would always be sustained by Yahweh. It was their job to explain in detail how that could occur. This belief in the promise of the paradigm, however, did insulate the community from those important problems that were not reducible to the puzzle form, because they could not be stated in terms of the tools supplied by the paradigm.

The normal-theological process of Israel prior to the eighth century B.C.E. was a highly cumulative enterprise and was very successful in its aim, the steady extension of the scope and precision of theological understanding of reality and human existence as Yahweh's chosen

people. It did not aim at novelty. Theological reflection and study under this paradigm tended to induce a paradigm change, however. The conversion of Israel's identity commenced with the awareness of anomaly. This anomaly or crisis comes to the normal theologian's attention when reality somehow violates the paradigm-induced expectations within normal theology. I propose that normal theology in Israel embarked on an extended study of the area of anomaly when it became aware of the pending crises. It sought to adjust the present paradigm so that the anomalous situation would be expected and understood. This material, I believe, can be found in the appearance of Deuteronomy and the later work known today as the Deuteronomistic History.

Finally, theologians in the cultic institution of Israel must be seen to have succeeded at their vocations. Anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm. The more precise and far-reaching that paradigm is, the more sensitive an indicator it provides of anomaly and hence of an occasion for paradigm change. I propose that, if the cult institution had not been effective in their involvement in normal theology, Israel would have perished like many other nations in that era, and Israel's identity would have been lost forever. But Israel's identity did survive and this survival is a witness to the effectiveness of the cult institution in doing theology.

Now the scene is set for the discussion of the actual emergence of critical prophecy. Critical prophecy should be seen to have emerged from a theological community which was involved in normal theology. This emergence came about as a response to an awareness of anomaly. This awareness provided a vacuum, drawing individuals into critical prophecy. The vacuum must be described in its institutional and historical components.

Critical prophecy should be seen to have emerged at specifically crucial times. The historical component of reality can describe the context of the emergence of critical prophecy at these crucial times. Here we must ask questions about the relationship between the prophetic message and the events of world history. Von Rad proposes appropriately that the relationship is so close that it has to be accepted as one of cause and effect. Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah work in the shadow of the threat of Assyria. Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel see disaster coming from the north from the Neo-Babylonians.⁸ These prophets, then, should be understood as being directly influenced by the historical component of their reality. The convulsions of their moment in history contributed to their emergence. The crisis of that specific time helped to

⁷Rad, p. 89.

⁸Fohrer—this relationship can be seen when Fohrer's dates for the individual prophets are superimposed on a historical time-line.

create the vacuum which drew these prophets into their vocations.

The historical component in the emergence of critical prophecy shows a pending crisis for each of these prophets. The focus of attention here seems to be on relationships. The relationships of the nations are in obvious trouble. When one nation threatens the autonomy and sovereignty of other nations, international relations are strained and tension mounts. With such a situation of tension and anxiety comes a need for resolution of the crisis. This need provides in the eighth century and again in the seventh century B.C.E. a vacuum which could only be filled by a new vision of human history. I propose that critical prophecy emerged in the tension and anxiety of a historical crisis, in part, to provide this new view of human history. The threats of Assyria in the eighth century B.C.E. and of the Neo-Babylonians in the seventh century B.C.E. vividly portrayed a breakdown in international order and relationship. This breakdown, in turn, called into question the relationship between Yahweh and the Israelites. The correlation between international relations and divine relations can be best evidenced in Amos 1 and 2. Rolf Knierim has pointed out about Amos' prophetic poem against the nations that the idea of Yahweh's anger burning against Israel's enemies was related to both the so-called Holy War or Divine Warrior tradition and the Day of Yahweh tradition. Knierim observes that

"Amos uses both in order to announce Yahweh's opposition even against Israel itself."⁹ The apparent breakdown in international relations and the nations' unusually brutal actions against one another cause Yahweh's anger to "not return." Yahweh will no longer forgive Israel or the other nations. This emphasis on divine relations is the critical-prophetic response to a historical situation filled with tension and anxiety concerning international relations. The significance of the two contributing traditions presented by Knierim will be discussed later. Most important at this time is my proposal that critical prophecy emerged in response to a crisis in the historical component of reality.

Critical prophecy should also be seen to have emerged into a particular institutional setting. The institutional component of reality can describe the context of the emergence of critical prophecy in these settings. Here my attention is focused on the relationship of critical prophecy to tradition and traditional structures.

My interest in the relationship between critical prophecy and tradition comes from the observation that tradition is the means by which a person or group develops and maintains a sense of identity. Tradition can be understood as the self-understanding which provides a continuity

⁹Rolf Knierim, "'I Will Not Cause It to Return' in Amos 1 and 2," in George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (eds), Canon and Authority (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), p. 175.

between past, present, and future events in the experience of objective and subjective reality. The issue of identity and self-understanding is particularly important in understanding critical prophecy. As I discussed earlier, the emergence of critical prophecy can be traced to some crucial times in history. Crisis can be seen as discontinuity. It is a discontinuity which requires the establishment of a new self-understanding. Critical prophecy emerged in institutional settings which were experiencing severe challenges to the established identity. Critical prophecy was involved in establishing a new self-understanding for the community because the traditional self-understanding could no longer provide the continuity between past, present, and future events which was necessary for the traditional identity to survive. Ronald Clements discusses the prophetic interest in tradition:

The prophetic consciousness of God did not mean either an abandoning of tradition, nor yet simply a wholehearted embracing of it. The prophet himself both drew upon, modified, and added to the religious traditions of Israel, at times affirming it, and at others rejecting it. No one simple approach therefore can adequately cover the prophet's relationship to tradition, and it is essential to remain open to the varied possibilities which each passage and each situation allows.¹⁰

This shows that critical prophecy was involved in a dynamic reshaping of tradition. I propose that this reshaping of tradition was necessary only because of the radical

¹⁰Ronald Clements, Prophecy and Tradition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 40.

discontinuities inherent in crisis. The necessity of the reshaping process provided a vacuum in the institutional component of reality. This vacuum in the identity of the community contributed to the emergence of critical prophecy. The tradition was not able to cope with the magnitude of the crisis. To summarize briefly, the emergence of critical prophecy was a response to a crisis situation in the historical component of reality and to a traditional identity which was unable to cope with the crisis in the institutional component of reality.

The relationship of critical prophecy to traditional structures is of primary importance also in the institutional component of reality. Clements states that there is no substantial evidence to "relate the prophets to a particular 'office' of the covenantal order between Yahweh and Israel which existed before the introduction of the monarchy."¹¹ In addition to this distinction, a further difference should be seen between those involved in critical prophecy and the institutional prophets of that time. Georg Fohrer describes the institutional scene:

In the period of so-called literary prophecy, the earlier forms gradually gave rise to a comprehensive class of prophets which, though having its own complex structure, can be referred to as a whole by the term "professional cultic prophecy." The professional prophets proclaim that every enemy of Israel and of

¹¹Clements, p. 41.

Yahweh will be destroyed, while the people of Yahweh is assured of salvation.¹²

Into this institutional scene, critical prophecy emerged. It emerged to confront the traditional structures with the inability of their tradition to cope with the pending crisis. The result of such confrontation is prophetic conflict. There is a tension between critical prophecy and tradition. It is my understanding that this tension would not occur if the tradition was able to cope with the pending crises. The tension between individuals involved in critical prophecy and institutional leadership is a symptom of an inappropriate traditional self-understanding for that historic moment.

Critical prophecy, then, should be seen to have emerged from a particular theological context and from normal-theological study. Normal theology does not aim to call forth new modes of human existence and does not seek to propose new theologies. Instead, normal-theological study is directed to the articulation of those modes of existence and theologies that the paradigm, or tradition, already supplies. Normal theology, however, possesses a built-in mechanism that ensures the flexibility of study whenever the paradigm ceases to function properly. At this point, theologians begin to behave quite differently and the nature of their reflective method changes.

¹²Fohrer, p. 345.

Critical prophecy emerged as a natural part of Israel's theological context. The anomaly appeared against the background of the tradition. Natural, too, is the resistance, or tension, involved. By ensuring that the paradigm will not too easily be surrendered, resistance guarantees that theologians will not be lightly distracted and that the anomalies that lead to paradigm change will penetrate existing understandings completely. The fact that critical prophecy emerged simultaneously from several theological communities is testimony to the strongly traditional nature of normal theology and to the completeness with which that traditional pursuit prepares the way for its own change.

The Theology of Critical Prophecy

So long as the tools a paradigm supplies continue to prove capable of solving the problems it defines, theology moves smoothly and confidently through the employment of those tools. The reason is clear. As in manufacture so in theology—retooling is an extravagance to be reserved for the occasion that demands it. The significance of crises is the indication they provide that an occasion for retooling has arrived. Let us assume now that crises are a necessary precondition for the emergence of critical prophecy and ask next how those drawn into this "extraordinary theology" respond to their existence. My discussion of the theology of critical prophecy begins with a definition of

extraordinary theology. Then I propose a view of critical prophecy as extraordinary theology in the areas of the call, the strategy, and the unique perspective of critical prophecy.

Critical prophecy should be understood as "extraordinary theology."¹³ "Extraordinary theology" is that theological reflection and study which is a response to anomaly or crisis. Three general responses should be noted. First, extraordinary theology affirms the existing paradigm. It does not mean an immediate renunciation of the existing paradigm. Theologians may begin to lose faith in the paradigm and then to consider alternatives when confronted by severe and prolonged anomalies, but they do not renounce the paradigm that has led them into crisis. Once it has achieved the status of paradigm, a theological understanding is declared invalid only if an alternative candidate is available to take its place. The act of judgment that leads theologians to reject a previously accepted theological understanding is always based upon more than a comparison of that understanding with reality. The decision to reject one paradigm is always simultaneously the decision to accept another, and the judgment leading to that decision involves the comparison of both paradigms with reality and with each other. Though history is unlikely to record their names, some have undoubtedly

¹³Kuhn, pp. 77-135.

been driven to desert theology because of their inability to tolerate crisis. Like artists, creative theologians must occasionally be able to live in a world out of joint. Once a first paradigm has been found, there is no such thing as theological study in the absence of any paradigm. To reject one paradigm without simultaneously substantiating another is to reject theology itself. That act reflects not on the paradigm but on the person.

Second, extraordinary theology broadens theological discussion. When an anomaly comes to be seen as more than just another puzzle of normal theology, the transition to crisis and then to extraordinary theology has begun. The anomaly itself comes to be more generally recognized as such by some in the profession. More and more attention is devoted to it by more and more of the most eminent theologians. If it still resists, many of them may view its resolution as the subject matter of their discipline. Early attacks upon the resistant problem will have followed the paradigm rules quite closely. But with continuing resistance, more and more of the attacks upon it will have involved some minor or not so minor articulations of the paradigm, no two of them quite alike, each partially successful, but none sufficiently so to be accepted as paradigm by theologians in general. Through this proliferation of divergent articulations, the rules of normal theology become increasingly blurred. Though there still is a paradigm, few theologians agree about what it is.

Third, extraordinary theology works for the resolution of crises. All crises begin with the blurring of a paradigm and the consequent loosening of the rules for normal theology. And all crises close in one of three ways. Sometimes normal theology ultimately proves able to handle the crisis-provoking problem despite the despair of those who have seen it as the end of the existing paradigm. On other occasions the problem resists even apparently radical new approaches. Then theologians may conclude that no solution will be forthcoming in the present state of theological study. The problem is labelled and set aside for a future generation with more developed tools. Or, finally, the case that is my major concern, a crisis may end with the emergence of a new candidate for paradigm and with the ensuing battle over its acceptance.

The transition from a paradigm in crisis to a new one from which a new tradition of normal theology can emerge is far from a cumulative process, one achieved by an articulation or extension of the old paradigm. Rather it is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field's most elementary generalizations as well as many of its paradigm methods and applications. When the transition is complete, theologians will have changed its view of theological reflection and study, its method, and its goal. This new paradigm, or a sufficient hint to permit later articulation, emerges all at once, sometimes in the middle of the night,

in the mind of a person deeply immersed in the crisis. What the nature of that final stage is—how an individual invents (or finds that he/she has invented) a new way of giving order to a chaotic reality—must here remain inscrutable. A direct extrapolation from the history of science is possible. In science, almost always the persons who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have been either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change. That observation can be made for theology as well. These are the ones who, being little committed by prior practice to the traditional rules of normal theology, are particularly likely to see that those rules no longer define a solvable puzzle and to conceive another set that can replace them.

Confronted with anomaly or crisis, theologians take a different attitude toward existing paradigms, and the nature of their reflective study changes accordingly. The proliferation of competing articulations, the willingness to try anything, the expression of explicit discontent, the recourse to debate over fundamentals, all these are symptoms of a transition from normal to extraordinary theological study.

My discussion of the theology of critical prophecy must begin with the call to critical prophecy. I propose here that the special emphasis of these prophets on their call provides evidence for the view of critical prophecy as

extraordinary theology. Von Rad discusses the prophetic call, stating that it gave rise to a new literary category, the account of the call.¹⁴ Innovation in the realm of form in spoken and written expression was done only when necessary. The old cultic forms made first personal singular statements about the relationships between God and the individual which almost anyone could have spoken. It was a collective and inclusive first person. But the statements of these prophets are expressly exclusive. Those who proposed these statements were those individuals who had been expressly called upon to abandon the fixed orders of religion which the majority of the people still held to be valid and because of it the prophets, in their new and completely unprecedented situation, were faced with the need to justify themselves both in their own and in the other people's eyes.¹⁵ This shows a very basic characteristic of extraordinary theology—the breakdown of convention and traditional form. This exclusive status signalled a radical departure from the normal-theological rules of that time. The critical prophets were proposing their own unique articulations of the paradigm under scrutiny. These unique presentations set them apart from the normal-theological community. Through the proliferation of divergent

¹⁴Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), II, 54.

¹⁵Amos 7-9; Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1-3; Isaiah 40.3-8; Zechariah 1.7—6.8.

articulations, the rules of normal theology became increasingly blurred. The variation of form, then, shows a departure from normal theology.

Von Rad also presents that the prophetic call was received as God's direct and very personal address to them.¹⁶ The work on which he was sent was not just limited to a fixed period. These men were removed from all their previous modes of life. Being a prophet was a condition which made deep inroads into a person's outward as well as inner life. Being a prophet is never represented as a tremendous intensification or transcendence of all previous religious experience. Neither does faith or any other personal endowment have the slightest part to play in preparing a person who is called to stand before Yahweh. "So deep is the gulf which separates the prophets from their past that none of their previous social relationships are carried over into the new way of life."¹⁷ Thus the critical prophets are doing theology under a completely different understanding. This is extraordinary theology. The transition from a paradigm in crisis to a new one from which a new tradition of normal theology can emerge is not a cumulative process. Rather it is a reconstruction of the understanding of human existence from new fundamentals. Critical prophecy was a totally new way of life, even at the social level, to

¹⁶Rad, OT Theology, II, 57.

¹⁷Ibid., II, 58.

the extent that a call meant relinquishing normal social life and all the social and economic securities which this offered.¹⁸ Dependence could only be placed upon Yahweh. The deep affect the prophetic call had upon the individual's personal lifestyle and destiny shows also a departure from traditional existence within normal theology.

A third factor to be considered about the prophetic call is the reception of revelation. Von Rad states that the call to be a prophet "was as a rule associated with another factor which made the future ambassador of God acquainted with the will and purpose of Yahweh in an extremely vivid way. This was the vision."¹⁹ There are many unanswered questions about these visions and auditions of the prophets. On one point, however, there appears to be some agreement, that visions and auditions came to the prophets from outside themselves, and that they came suddenly and completely without premeditation. This view of the critical-prophetic revelation fits well into the earlier proposals concerning extraordinary theology. The new paradigm, or a sufficient hint to permit later articulation, emerges all at once in the mind of a person deeply immersed in the crisis. These visions which were intended to open the prophet's eyes to coming events were not only of a spiritual sort but were also to be concrete realities in the objective

¹⁸ See Amos 7.14 and Jeremiah 15.17 for examples.

¹⁹ Rad, OT Theology, II, 58-59.

world. They showed a new way of giving order to a chaotic reality. The unexpected appearance of a new paradigm also shows critical prophecy to be explained well as extraordinary theology.

To summarize briefly, the call to critical prophecy appears to provide appropriate evidence for the proposal that critical prophecy is a manifestation of extraordinary theology as it has been defined. The departure from the rules of normal theology, the radical separation of the new way of life from the old one, and the spontaneity of the appearance of the new way of understanding human existence in the historical reality—these show the extraordinary nature of critical prophecy as it responds to crisis.

It seems appropriate now to discuss the apparent strategy involved in critical prophecy as extraordinary theology. The primary aim of critical prophecy appears to be the resolution of a crisis. The crisis here refers to the inability of normal theology to provide an adequate understanding of historical events for the maintenance of Israel's identity. This crisis must be resolved or Israel's unique identity will be destroyed. Extraordinary theology emerges for the purpose of resolving crises. Here, too, critical prophecy should be seen as extraordinary theology. Crises begin with anomaly, as unexpected event or phenomenon. All crises close or are resolved in one of three ways.

First, sometimes normal theology ultimately proves able to handle the crisis-provoking problem despite the despair of those who have seen it as the end of the existing paradigm. Here the predictions of critical prophecy from the new perspective are not verified at the time for which they are proposed. A case in point can be taken with Isaiah and the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian invasion in 701 B.C.E. At that time, Isaiah had been active in Jerusalem as a critical prophet for about 40 years. During this time, he had proposed an understanding that Yahweh would not sustain Jerusalem but would destroy that city and the identity which went with it. This was a radical departure from the paradigm which held that Yahweh was the creator and sustainer of Israel's identity. When Jerusalem was delivered from destruction at the hands of the Assyrians in 701 B.C.E., the old paradigm was again verified as evidenced particularly in Psalms 46. The extraordinary theologian is shown here to be inaccurate in his own time frame. Normal theology at that time proved to be able to handle that crisis-provoking problem despite Isaiah's dire messages to the contrary. Isaiah was responding to the threat of the Assyrians and this threat did not proceed to destroy Israel's identity which was retained by the survival of Jerusalem. Here normal theology yielded partially to extraordinary theology but then reasserted itself again with no paradigm change.

Second, other times crises come to a close when no solution is forthcoming in theological study. These crises call for the replacement of the existing paradigm but no viable alternatives are produced. The problem is labelled by those involved in theology and set aside for a future generation for resolution, if resolution is possible at all. Two critical prophets stand out as having participated in extraordinary theology to this result—Amos and Micah. They preached the end of the existing paradigm in the near future but do not propose a new paradigm explicitly. Von Rad states that Amos' actual predictions of the future can be reduced to the simple statement that Israel would suffer a calamitous military defeat and be taken into exile.²⁰ This is a clear departure from the existing paradigm that Israel's identity was created and would always be sustained by Yahweh. Amos thus operates as an extraordinary theologian in calling for a new paradigm but offers no solution which would allow Israel's identity to be created anew or even be sustained through the exile period. Micah as well attacks the false security of those who think they stand in God's favor and are therefore protected against any disaster. His sole message is that of inescapable destruction. Amos and Micah label the problem and set it aside for future solution, if a solution is possible.

²⁰Rad, OT Theology, II, 134.

Third, a crisis may end with the emergence of a new candidate for paradigm and with the ensuing battle over its acceptance. In these instances, critical prophecy is involved in revolutionary change. Those operating within this framework are Hosea, Isaiah and Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. They are involved in extraordinary theology in its complete form. Not only is the existing paradigm rejected but a new one is proposed. Hosea foretells a new entry into the land, Isaiah and Zephaniah a new David and a new Zion, Jeremiah a new covenant, and Ezekiel a new heart and Spirit. They deal radically with the existing paradigm and seek to change theological understandings. A theological revolution is here taken to be a non-cumulative developmental episode in which an older paradigm is replaced in whole or in part by an incompatible new one. There appear to be some important similarities between political and theological revolutions.

One aspect of the parallelism must be already apparent. Political revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. In much the same way, theological revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, again often restricted to a narrow subdivision of the theological community, that an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the explanation of an aspect of reality to

which that paradigm itself had previously led the way. In both political and theological development the sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis is prerequisite to revolution.

Second, political revolutions aim to change political institutions in ways that those institutions themselves prohibit. Their success then necessitates the partial relinquishment of one set of institutions in favor of another, and in the interim, society is not fully governed by institutions at all. Initially it is crisis alone that attenuates the role of political institutions as we have already seen it attenuate the role of paradigms. In increasing numbers individuals become estranged from political life and behave more and more eccentrically within it. Then, as the crisis deepens, many of these individuals commit themselves to some concrete proposal for the reconstruction of society in a new institutional framework. At that point, the society is divided into competing camps or parties, one seeking to defend the old institutional structures and the other seeking to institute some new one. Once that polarization has occurred, political recourse fails. Because the political matrix for each group is different, the parties to a revolutionary conflict must finally resort to mass persuasion, often including force. Though revolutions have had a vital role in the evolution of political institutions, that role depends upon their being partially extrapolitical or

extrainstitutional events.

There are noteworthy similarities in theological development. Like the choice between competing political institutions, that between competing paradigms proves to be a choice between incompatible modes of community life. Because it has that character, the choice is not and cannot be determined merely by the evaluative procedures characteristic of normal theology for these depend in part upon a particular paradigm, and that paradigm is at issue. When paradigms enter, as they must, into a debate about paradigm choice, their role is necessarily circular. Each group uses its own paradigm to argue in that paradigm's defense. To the extent that two theological schools disagree about what is a problem and what is a solution, they will inevitably talk through each other when debating the relative merits of their respective paradigms. In these partially circular arguments, each paradigm will be shown to satisfy more or less the criterion that it dictates for itself and to fall short of a few of those dictated by its opponent. Since no paradigm ever solves all the problems it defines and since no two paradigms leave all the same problems unsolved, paradigm debates always involve the question: which problems is it more important to have solved?

This perspective on theological development seems to be particularly useful in understanding prophetic conflict. All of the critical prophets in this discussion can be seen to have a conflict with the cult institution of the

time. The crises which caused the emergence of critical prophecy brought about a division in the theological community between competing groups, one seeking to defend the old institutional structures and the other seeking to institute some new one. This perspective allows a more appropriate understanding of the dynamics involved in critical prophecy than is gained in the many proposals available on so-called true and false prophecy. This seems to be an inaccurate and over-simplified view of prophetic conflict. Here it can be seen that conflict between competing groups is a natural part of theological development. The tension that arises between normal and extraordinary theology is necessary and proper at times of crisis in the theological community. So it can be seen that theological revolutions aim to change theological institutions when a paradigm which is foundational to the institutions is challenged by historical events. The distinction proposed often between the so-called true and false prophets is an attempt to moralize. The distinction here between prophets of differing theological paradigms seems to allow for prophetic conflict without moralizing.

Critical prophecy emerges from the awareness of a crisis situation which has theological, institutional, and historical components. Its aim is the resolution of that crisis. Theological revolution is one possible close to a crisis. In this situation, there is a natural tension and conflict between those involved in normal theology and

those involved in extraordinary theology.

Finally my discussion of critical prophecy must approach the subject of the new paradigm. What changes were instituted as a result of critical prophecy? How was theology in Israel affected? To answer these very pertinent questions the existing paradigm prior to the crises must be defined in more detail. Then the post-revolution paradigm can be described.

The paradigm under inspection by critical prophecy was that Israel's identity was created and sustained by Yahweh. Von Rad sheds some light on this paradigm assumption:

Yahwism experienced Yahweh as a power who established fixed orders, but with a difference. In the other religions the deities exercised their functions and received their worship within these orders—they in fact embodied the orders on which the cosmos and the state rested—whereas for the faith of Israel, Yahweh was outside of these. He was their creator and guarantor; but he could not be identified with them.²¹

Thus Yahweh was revealed to be active and present in creating and sustaining order. A major discipline in Israel then was the study of order in human experience. Wisdom was such a study. Von Rad states, "Like every other nation, Israel understood 'wisdom' as a practical knowledge of the laws of life and of the world, based upon experience."²² Israel's wisdom is a very broad and complex

²¹Rad, OT Theology, II, 111-112.

²²Ibid., I, 418.

phenomenon. The starting point for practically all that wisdom says about life is basic experience. The task for humanity is that of mastering life. To this end humanity needs to know it, and dares not cease from looking and listening to discover whether in the tangle of events there can be discerned a law or some order. Wisdom examines the phenomenal world to discern its secrets, but always allows whatever it finds to stand in its own particular character. Experiences always remain open to correction, and are basically capable of enlargement. A philosophical system can in theory be thought of as rounded off. But wisdom is always open and never brought to conclusion. Wisdom is not an exclusive understanding of the truth, for the proverb which corrects another does not prove it false; it only leads one to another order which has in the meantime come into the field of vision. What this way of thinking deals with is rather compartments of orders, which it arranges in a row.²³ It is easy to understand wisdom as a part of normal theology in Israel. In addition to the attention of wisdom to synchronic relationships, it can be understood as being concerned with cause and effect, that is, the question about an order which can be discerned in the diachronic succession of events.²⁴ In both cases the task of the wise, in their

²³Rad, OT Theology, I, 422.

²⁴Gerhard von Rad, Wisdom in Israel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 124.

search for knowledge, was the mastering of the events of life. Concerning the paradigm in this discussion, it is quite reasonable to see wisdom as a major factor in normal theology. In fact it is quite possible that wisdom in Israel developed within the activity of normal theology under the paradigm that Israel's identity was formed and sustained by Yahweh. Israel's experience until the eighth century B.C.E. was supportive of such an understanding. Because this was Israel's experience, it was the aim of Israel's wisdom to discover the order which created such experience. Wisdom's orientation is characteristically existential. It is existential because it relies completely upon apparent order. Wisdom had no evidence or reason to expect any abnormalities to occur in the future; the future is the extension of the present.²⁵ The wise looked for order in the past and present and expected nothing to disturb that order in the future. I propose that wisdom participated in the normal theology of Israel prior to the exile; that wisdom was overwhelmingly existential in its view of history; and that wisdom was a primary dialogue partner with critical prophecy during the paradigm crisis. Wisdom was a major defender and supporter of the existing paradigm that Israel's identity was created and would always be sustained by Yahweh. Critical prophecy questioned that paradigm seriously and eventually proposed

²⁵Rad, OT Theology, II, 102.

another paradigm to replace the existing one which was created and defended by wisdom.

When we turn to critical prophecy, we find many examples of this same understanding of history. Indeed, because the existing paradigm held an existential view of history, extraordinary theology at its start had to work within that existential view until it replaced the paradigm. Since a paradigm was present, there could be no theological study in the absence of a paradigm. To reject one paradigm without simultaneously substituting another is to reject theology itself. Much discussion has been done about the parallels between prophecy and wisdom literature. Of course there are many such parallels because, at least at first, critical prophecy accepted the same paradigm as wisdom and, later, it was in a debate with wisdom over the acceptance of a new paradigm. Critical prophecy paid serious attention to the theory that Yahweh accompanied Israel along her road through history. In addition, however, critical prophecy shows something else that is quite new—a keen and unprecedented awareness of the great historical movements and changes of the era. The correlation between the critical prophets and world history is the real key to understanding critical prophecy correctly. They placed the new historical acts of God which they saw around them in exactly the same category as the old basic events of the canonical history but then came to realize that this new historical action was to

surpass and supersede the old. Von Rad states: "They were in fact called forth by their conviction that Yahweh was bringing about a new era for his people."²⁶ He continues by saying that the new element which differentiates the prophets from all previous spokesmen of Yahwism is the eschatological element.²⁷ He clarifies the term "eschatological" as the view of history that places its attention completely upon "an entirely new action in history on the part of Yahweh."²⁸ The critical-prophetic message differs from all previous Israelite theology, which was based on the past saving history, in that the critical prophets looked for the decisive factor in Israel's whole existence in some future event. The critical-prophetic teaching then is only eschatological when the prophets expelled Israel from the safety of the old saving actions and suddenly shifted the basis of salvation to a future action of God.²⁹

Therefore, it should be seen that critical prophecy sought to change the theological view of history in Israel. The basically existential paradigm was attacked and an eschatological paradigm was proposed for acceptance by the theological community. This eschatological view of history meets the criteria defining a paradigm—it was sufficiently

²⁶Rad, OT Theology, II, 113.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., II, 116.

²⁹Ibid., II, 118.

unprecedented so it could attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of theological order and simultaneously it was sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for the contemporary theological community to resolve. The new paradigm proposed by critical prophecy was this: that Israel's identity would be created anew by Yahweh in some future event in history. This brings with it the need to consider briefly the expectation of the Day of Yahweh, which is the very heart of this eschatological paradigm proposed by critical prophecy.

The Day of Yahweh is understood as the future event in history which will bring a radical new creation into existence. There are only sixteen passages which refer to the Day of Yahweh in so many words.³⁰ One of the most important passages I think is Zephaniah's prophecy concerning the Day of Yahweh (Zeph. 1.7-18). The description begins with the exclamation that the Day of Yahweh is near. The day is designated as a sacrificial feast which Yahweh prepares for the guests whom he invites. The day, however, is a day of distress, of darkness and gloom, of Yahweh's war against his foes. Here, as in other passages, the critical prophets expected the Day of Yahweh to bring war. The overwhelming view of history that Israel's identity would be created anew by Yahweh through an act of war

³⁰ Isaiah 2.12; 13.6,9; 22.5; 34.8//Jeremiah 46.10//Ezekiel 7.10; 13.5; 30.3//Joel 1.15; 2.1,11,31; 3.14//Amos 5.18-20//Obadiah 15//Zephaniah 1.7,8,14-18//Zechariah 14.1.

clearly refers back to the Holy War and Divine Warrior traditions as brought out by Knierim on Amos 1 and 2. But this time as seen in Amos 1 and 2 Yahweh will wage war on Israel also. The Day of Yahweh will bring a radical new creation into existence. Even for Amos and Micah who did not actually propose that Israel would gain a new identity, the Day of Yahweh could be seen as the decisive event in human history. So here too the view of history introduced by critical prophecy is eschatological—seeing human existence as meaningful only in its relationship to a future event in history.

In this chapter I have proposed an understanding of critical prophecy as extraordinary theology. This extraordinary theology responds directly to a crisis situation in the existing normal theology. The aim of extraordinary theology is the resolution of the crisis. In order to resolve the crisis in the theological community, sometimes it is necessary for extraordinary theology to propose a new paradigm to direct theological reflection and study to replace the existing paradigm which directs normal theology. This revolutionary process involves a tension and conflict between competing groups. The tension and conflict involved implicitly in extraordinary theology is a natural part of theological development within historical and institutional reality. In addition, critical prophecy in the Old Testament should be seen as the extraordinary theology which emerged in the eighth and

seventh centuries B.C.E. in response to the theological crisis created in part by the existing paradigm. The primarily existential view of history supplied by that paradigm was questioned, attacked, and finally replaced by a variety of eschatological views of history supplied by critical prophecy. These eschatological views of history then formed the dominant paradigm which can be seen to have directed theological study in normal theology from that time until the present. I have described three periods in history in this discussion: first, the period of a primarily existential view of history; second, the period of critical prophecy; and third, the period of a primarily eschatological view of history. In this presentation I have shown critical prophets as having been the revolutionary change agents of Israel's view of history. I have not, however, understood critical prophecy to be synonymous with that eschatological view. The critical prophecy accounted in the Old Testament was eschatological but critical prophecy at another time would not have to show this same view. Critical prophecy is involved in extraordinary theology and extraordinary theology can question any paradigm when a crisis arises.

Chapter 3

SYSTEMS' APPROACH TO JUSTICE

In the preceding chapter, I have described a dynamic system for theological understanding of critical prophecy. In this chapter, I intend to expand the understanding of that system using material from Reinhold Niebuhr's The Nature and Destiny of Man. In this material Niebuhr proposes justice as a global responsibility. He issues a challenge:

The economic interdependence of the world places us under the obligation, and gives us the possibility, of enlarging the human community so that the principle of order and justice will govern the international as well as the national community.¹

Niebuhr calls for the human community to enlarge its perspective, past a strictly nationalistic view of justice to an international or global perspective. Niebuhr's own hope for the future is dependent on the willingness of humanity to widen its vision of ethical responsibility. My discussion will include four parts: first, the dialectics in Niebuhr's work are defined; second, the explanation of the simple interaction between dialectics is given; third, the explanation of complex interactions between dialectic subsystems; and fourth, and conflict between eschatological understanding of history and Niebuhr's equilibrium principles. This discussion proposes a particular understanding

¹Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), II, 284.

of theology which encompasses both normal and extraordinary theology. Normal theology today is directed by a primarily eschatological paradigm instituted by critical prophecy in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. This view of history, which relies so heavily on some future event for meaning, has contributed significantly to our present crisis situation. In continually looking for meaning in a future action of God, normal theology has laid the foundation for existential irresponsibility. This chapter proposes that the Christian community must widen its vision of ethical responsibility to a global perspective and must focus this vision on the hope for justice in values, lifestyles, and structures of the global community rather than for an eschatological solution to the global crisis.

Niebuhr implicitly proposes four major dialectic combinations in his presentation of the destiny of humanity. His predisposition to equilibrium explanations of human activity causes the need for dialectics rather than strict definitions of individual phenomena. The principle of dialectics allows the introduction of spectrums of options in place of quantized categories and provides for discussions on pressures for change and counterpressures for retaining the status quo. The dialectic principle applied by Niebuhr is a good tool for explaining social interactions. In addition, I find this approach to be completely consistent with what is presently known as systems theory. In his dialectics, Niebuhr develops a view of human

existence as having dynamic qualities on many levels of "community"; the goal being the establishment of an international sense of community.

The dialectic principle acknowledges an idealistic goal and realistic attempts to actualize that goal. It is established that these realistic attempts, in one sense, are successful in actualizing the goal and, in another sense, are contradictory of the goal. The dialectic principle is dependent on the simultaneous actualization and contradiction of a goal by the attempts of humans. This principle is well explained in Niebuhr's view of human nature. Human experience is characterized by Niebuhr as being simultaneously creative and finite. Niebuhr, therefore, presents his observations on human nature and human destiny in a dialectic, systems model to establish the foundation for his world view of equilibrium and balance.

In his discussion of human destiny, Niebuhr exposes four major dialectic combinations which explain his views on the meaning of history, on social interactions in community, on the spirit of community, and on the structures of community. Each of these dialectic combinations can be seen as defining a specific spectrum of possibilities for self-identification and self-determination. These spectrums require detailed definition.

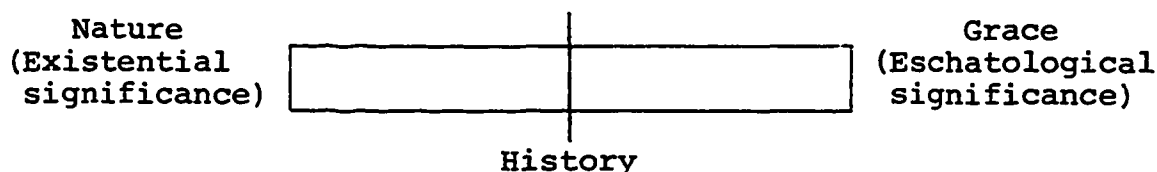
1. View of the Meaning of History: The Nature/Grace Dialectic Spectrum. The variable is the person's historical methodology and the limits are nature and grace.

Human history is rooted in the natural process, but it is something more than either the determined sequences of natural causation or the capricious variations and occurrences of the natural world. It is compounded of natural necessity and human freedom.²

For Niebuhr, human history, like the individual, has certain undeniable limitations placed on it by natural processes but can also transcend these natural processes.

All human actions are conditioned on the one hand by nature's necessities and limitations, and determined on the other hand by an explicit or implicit loyalty to man's conception of the changeless principles which underlie the change.³

History moves between the limits of nature and eternity. It, in other words, can be understood as having an existential significance, or an eschatological significance, or a combination of existential and eschatological significances. History is understood as being a variable quantity on the Nature/Grace Dialectic spectrum and varies as a function of the person's approach to interpreting history.



"Nature" is the term Niebuhr uses to summarize the extreme view that history can be accurately characterized by a continuous sequence of events. Classical naturalism, according to Niebuhr, seeks to reduce history "to be no more

²Niebuhr, II, 1.

³Ibid., II, 2.

than a series of meaningless recurrences of the natural world."⁴ He defines nature to be that view of history which purposes to dissect human existence into nothing more than a sequence of cause-effect relationships with a total negation of human freedom. The only possible significance in such existence can be in the instantaneous relationship between interacting units. This is an existential view of human existence.

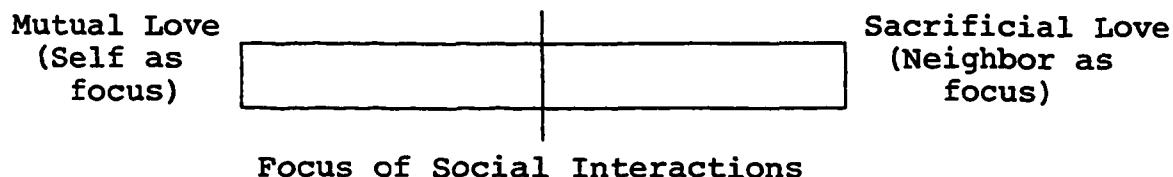
"Grace" is the term Niebuhr uses to summarize the extreme view that history's meaning is disclosed only in the end of history. "Grace is the power of God over man."⁵ Classical idealism and mysticism see the natural and temporal process as something from which humanity must be emancipated. There is no yearning for fulfillment in history; there is only a desire to be freed from history. Niebuhr defines grace to be that view of human existence which experiences meaning and significance only in total actualization of goals. There is meaning in any one event only as that event participates in the final event. This is an eschatological view of human existence.

2. View of Social Interactions in Community: The Mutual Love/Sacrificial Love Dialectic Spectrum. The variable is the intensive focus of a person's social interaction in the community and the limits are mutual love and sacrificial love. "Community" can be understood as those

⁴Niebuhr, II, 8.

⁵Ibid., II, 102.

persons or groups which are chosen to define the context of personal, historical activity. Within this community context, the intensity, or quality, of a person's social interaction is variable. The quality of a person's sense of community is dependent on the role that self-will plays in social decision making. A person's actions can be seen as most intense when they are completely focused on increasing the welfare of one person in the community. When social interactions focus on the self, mutual love is displayed. When, on the other hand, social interactions focus on a neighbor in the community, sacrificial love is displayed.



From the standpoint of history mutual love is the highest good. Only in mutual love, in which the concern of one person for the interests of another prompts and elicits a reciprocal affection, are the social demands of historical existence satisfied . . .⁶

The focus of a person's intense social interactions is of primary importance. Mutual love involves the person in community activity but the focus is on the self and the intention is to satisfy personal needs. Such activity may indeed satisfy the needs of others as well but this

⁶Niebuhr, II, 68.

satisfaction is of secondary importance. In essence, mutual love seeks to increase the satisfaction of self with no person of the community suffering a decrease in satisfaction.

Sacrificial love seeks to increase the satisfaction of a neighbor with no attention being given to personal satisfaction. Niebuhr characterizes sacrificial love as extreme disinterestedness, meaning that no interest is given to the personal consequences. The focus is on the neighbor and the intention is to satisfy the neighbor's needs.

Christ as the norm of human nature defines the final perfection of man in history. This perfection is not so much a sum total of various virtues or an absence of transgression of various laws; it is the perfection of sacrificial love.⁷

Niebuhr describes Christ as a prototype for a human existence that transcends history. Sacrificial love focuses attention on the neighbor rather than on the self in the context of the community.

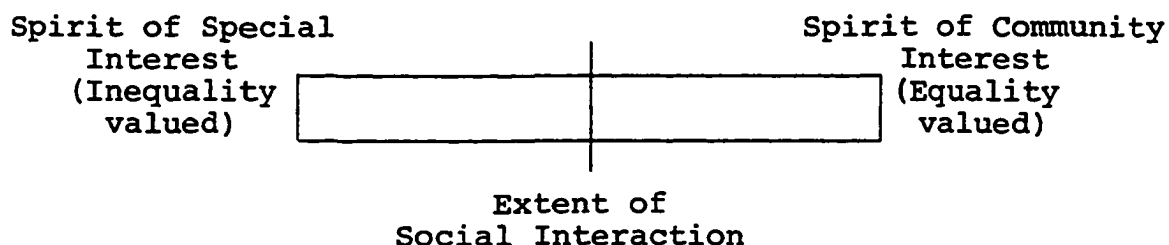
3. View of the Spirit of Community: Special Interest/Community Interest Dialectic Spectrum. The variable is the extent, or quantity, of a person's social interactions in the community and the limits are a spirit of special interest and a spirit of community interest. Again, community can be understood as those persons or groups which are chosen to define the context of personal, historical activity. Within this context, the extent of a person's social interactions is variable. At this level, Niebuhr

⁷Niebuhr, II, 68.

explains some of the dynamics of justice. Justice is conceptualized as having as its idealistic goal equality. Principles of justice are established within a community in accordance with the community's sense of obligation to special interests and to general, community interests.

All systems, rules, and laws governing social relations are on the one hand instruments of mutuality and community; and they contain on the other hand mere approximations of, and positive contradictions to, the ideal of brotherhood.⁸

A person's actions can be seen as most extensive when they are equally devoted to increasing the welfare of each person in the community. It should be noted that social interactions which are most intensive are least extensive and those which are least intensive are most extensive. The extent, or quantity, of a person's social interactions in the community varies between extreme special interest and extreme community interest.



(Laws and systems of justice) are merely approximations (of the spirit of brotherhood) in so far as justice presupposes a tendency of various members of a community to take advantage of each other, or to be more concerned

⁸Niebuhr, II, 248.

with their own weal than with that of others. Because of this tendency all systems of justice make careful distinctions between the rights and interests of various members of a community.⁹

The spirit of special interest values the possibility of one person or group to rise above the others. Proponents cite the theory of natural selection as their justification—"survival of the fittest" is seen to create inequality. The American dream seems to value the spirit of special interests—that a poor boy can grow up to be a millionaire or President values the possibility of one person to rise above all others through self-interested social interactions.

The spirit of community interest values equality for all members of the community. Strict equality as a pinnacle of the ideal of justice implicitly points toward love as the final norm of justice: "for equal justice is the approximation of brotherhood under the conditions of sin. A higher justice always means a more equal justice."¹⁰ The quest for a more equal justice has recently been the emphasis of the global Christian community. The preunderstanding of this emphasis is a sense of global community.

Every age, and more particularly the age of technics, has confronted men with the problem of relating their lives to a larger number of their fellowmen. The task of creating community and avoiding anarchy is constantly pitched on broader and broader levels.¹¹

⁹Niebuhr, II, 252.

¹⁰Ibid., II, 254.

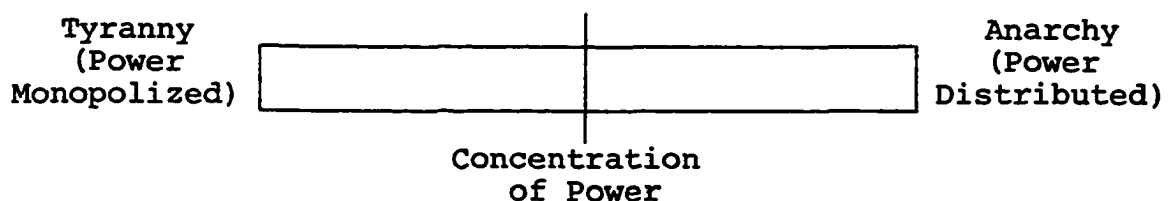
¹¹Ibid., II, 245.

The spirit of community interest involves, therefore, expanding the definition of community to a global perspective and the quest for a more equal justice.

4. View of the Structures of Community: The Tyranny/Anarchy Dialectic Spectrum. The variable is the concentration of political, economic, and social power and the limits are tyranny and anarchy. The concentration of power varies between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy.

These two elements of communal life—the central organizing principle and power, and the equilibrium of power—are essential and perennial aspects of community organization; and no moral or social advance can redeem society from its dependence upon these two principles.¹²

Each principle of communal organization—the organization of power and the balance of power—contain possibilities of contradicting the law of brotherhood. "The organizing principle and power may easily degenerate into tyranny."¹³ "Again, the principle of balance of power is always pregnant with the possibility of anarchy."¹⁴ Therefore, political, economic, and social power can be completely concentrated (tyranny) or completely and evenly distributed (anarchy).



¹²Niebuhr, II, 257-8. ¹³Ibid., II, 258.

¹⁴Ibid.

Tyranny is the extreme concentration of political power, monopoly the extreme concentration of economic power, and feelings of superiority the extreme concentration of social power. Each of these excesses are the possible consequences of the necessary process of organizing power. Tyranny, monopoly, and feelings of superiority are made possible also as a result of personal and societal valuation of the spirit of special interest. There is considerable pressure toward the concentration of power.

Anarchy is the extreme and equal distribution of political power, perfect competition the extreme and equal distribution of economic power, and the loss of a sense of identity the extreme and equal distribution of social power. They are consequences of personal and societal valuation of the spirit of community interest and brotherhood.

Although Niebuhr did not formulate his understandings of these dialectics in the spectrums presented here, the relationships involved in the spectrums and between the spectrums are expanded easier in this form. There is a requirement, after the initial definition step, to describe the dynamics of these dialectic situations. The simple interactions between dialectic forces within a spectrum must be explained before complex interactions can be understood.

To begin, the spectrum is an open system. This means that each spectrum is an ordering and organization of simpler components of human activities and motives. The

limits of the spectrum describe the extreme components of the phenomenon involved and the spectrum itself describes a continuous variation of minor components of the spectral system. The spectrum can be understood as an open system when it allows influence from outside the system and exerts influence outside the system. Describing a spectrum as an open system leads to discussions of the interaction dynamics—pressure, friction or viscosity, and counterpressure.

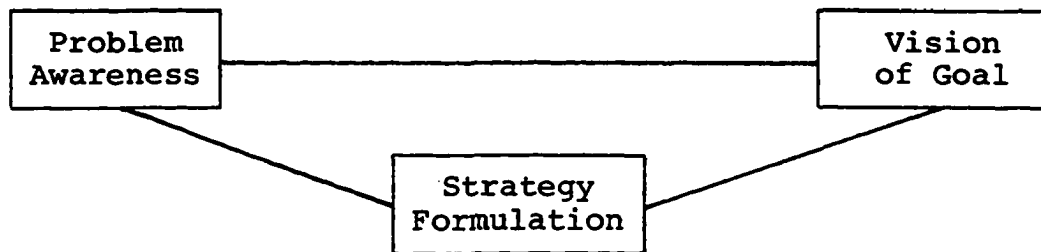
An open system experiences outside influences which can be understood as pressure. Outside influences put pressure on the variable to create change. This pressure can be in the direction of either limit and can be of varying strength. When pressure is exerted on the variable in an open system, there is a resistance to such pressure for change. This resistance to change can be understood as either friction or viscosity. Friction is resistance to relative motion—this seems most appropriate to a discussion of relationships. Viscosity is resistance to actual motion. Whether the change proposed by an outside pressure is relative or actual in nature, there is a resistance to it. There are varying degrees of resistance, similar to the degrees of pressure. Some systems are quite "dense" or highly viscous and, therefore, resist change very well. Other systems are more fluid and responsive to pressure. In addition to pressure and resistance, open systems can exert influence or pressure on other systems. A system's

response to pressure takes on two characteristics—resistance and counterpressure. Counterpressure attempts to influence the pressure origin to decrease the pressure.

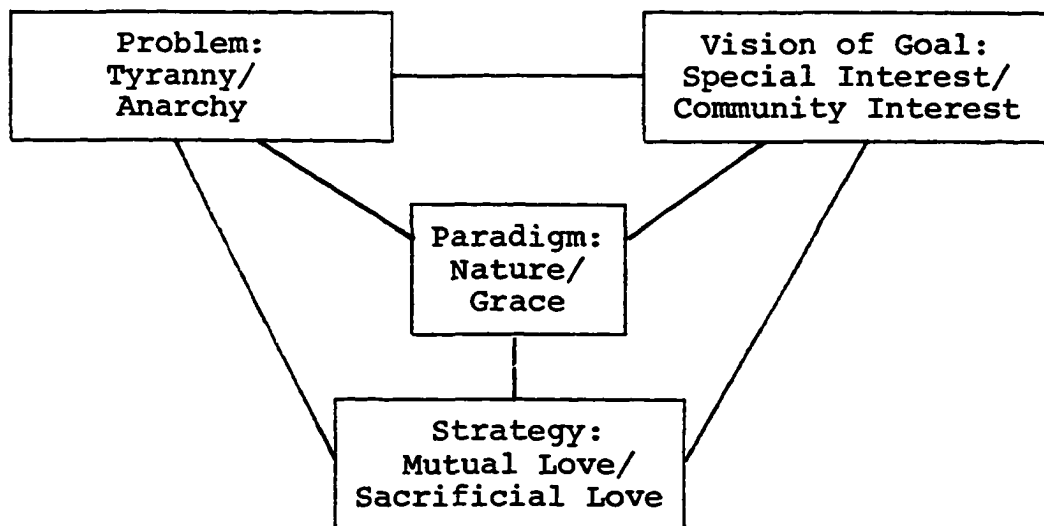
These spectral dynamics can be generalized in more familiar terms. The spectrum can be seen to be "liberal" when it allows pressure to be exerted to bring about change in the variable and resists that pressure very little. A liberal spectrum or system is responsive to outside influences and exerts the minimum resistance and counterpressure. A spectrum can be seen to be "conservative" when it accepts little pressure to be exerted by outside sources and shows great resistance to the possibility of change. A conservative spectrum or system purposes to be unresponsive to outside influences and exerts a great resistance and counterpressure. This introduces an additional dialectic spectrum with the variable being the rate of responsiveness and the limits being maximum liberalism and maximum conservatism. It should be noted that both limits are equally precarious. Maximum liberalism is so highly fluid that tradition and customs vanish and leads to a loss of self-identity. Maximum conservatism is so rigid that tradition and customs are worshipped and this causes isolation from reality.

Discussion of complex interactions between dialectic systems requires the definition of a new system which contains these defined systems. The design for this organizing system is taken from Dr. C. Dean Freudenberger of the School of Theology at Claremont in his problem-solving method and

shows some differences for the discussion here. Freudenberg in his problem-solving method shows problem awareness, vision of the goal, and strategy formulation as the components of the design for dealing with the present global crises. Each component, in addition, is influential on the others and experiences influence from them. The design allows for both continuous input and continuous feedback and evaluation.



It is my opinion that an approximation of this design and intention can achieve a helpful understanding of the very complex interactions involved in Niebuhr's explanation of justice and the world community.



In this model, awareness of a problem is understood to be the initiator of consequent interaction of the total system to deal with the problem. But, it seems the system is more complex than that. Actually, the awareness of a problem situation in the structures of justice presupposes a contrast with a norm which provides a standard for judging the structures to be acceptable or unacceptable. This norm is provided by the understood extent of social interaction. In addition, the social standard would not be defined without a partial focus of attention in social function with respect to the neighbor. Likewise, a focus of attention to the neighbor requires a world view that gives historical actions both an existential and eschatological significance. Through this reasoning, it can be seen that a person's world view concerning historical significance is instrumental in bringing any dynamics to this problem-solving method. Therefore, it is my assumption and thesis that a person's understanding of the meaning of history is the paradigm which directs participation in this process of problem-solving.

Each link in the design signifies interaction which is both input and feedback. In addition to the dynamic qualities of this system which are shown by a link in the design, the rate of responsiveness, which is the variable on the Conservative/Liberal Dialectic Spectrum, is different for each subsystem. The rate of responsiveness for the

concentration of power most times is quite slow. The rate for a person's focus of social attention can be quite fast. Therefore, given this design, there is the possibility of input and feedback between spectrums of the system and of varying rates of responsiveness for each spectrum. To complicate matters further, the rate of responsiveness of any one spectrum may change as well. This change would most likely occur as a result of an increased sense of urgency and need. In my opinion, it is necessary to include a person's understanding of history in the range of possible interactions concerning justice and world community. Niebuhr seems to make such a requirement in the key position of importance which he affords the nature/grace dialectic.

It has been seen thus far that Niebuhr's understanding of history is a primary factor in ethical responsibility. It is a person's understanding of history that determines the degree of participation he/she will accept in the Christian quest for justice. This brings into the discussion my final point. If a balanced understanding of history is needed to draw a person into active participation in the global problem-solving method, the Christian community that understands history as primarily eschatological should not be expected to join in the vision or the task proposed in a just society. A large proportion of the Christian community holds fast to an almost exclusively eschatological belief and hope. This group, according to the assumptions of the prior exposition, haven't the

theological potential for dealing with the severe historical problems of the near future. The growing crisis in the world has created a vacuum in theology. Theology must provide a basis for discerning significance and meaning apart from eschatology. The need for justice requires a view of history which is balanced. This creates a pressure toward a more existential view of history and from the present highly eschatological view. This pressure in a fundamental part of Christian theology, I propose, creates a theological crisis. As has been shown in the prior chapter, extraordinary theology emerges to resolve crisis. I am convinced that the present crisis situation in theological study will bring about a new period of critical prophecy. If we are sincere in our commitment to bring about justice in a global community, we must be willing to provide a theology which is appropriate. It seems evident that the existing paradigm in normal theology is incapable of providing such an appropriate theology. But this presupposes a growing tension between normal and extraordinary theologians on many levels of human existence and understanding. When we enlarge our concept of community to a global perspective, the demand for justice increases in intensity. Then we come to realize that it is irresponsible to expect resolution to this crisis of justice only in some future act of God. Ethical responsibility in a crisis situation requires a departure from the existing

paradigm of our normal theology. The next chapter seeks to examine a new paradigm which is more appropriate for the theological discussion of justice.

Chapter 4

A SYSTEMS' PARADIGM

This chapter addresses the need for a new paradigm to direct normal theological reflection and study. I have chosen to present material by Ervin Laszlo in Introduction to Systems Philosophy. In it Laszlo seeks to provide a new paradigm for contemporary thought. My purpose in presenting this material is to propose the systems approach as an appropriate alternative to the existing eschatological paradigm which directs theological study. In addition, it is appropriate to this discussion because I have defined critical prophecy as part of a system of normal theology and have shown the pursuit of justice to operate in a dynamic problem-solving system. This material from systems theory will give greater clarity to these systems. I intend in this chapter to provide a philosophical basis for theological study which is able to cope with the pending global crisis. This will be done in describing general systems theory briefly using Laszlo's material and then proposing a new paradigm for theological study from this perspective.

General systems theory seeks to explain the existence of organized complexity in natural systems. A natural system should be understood as a function of four

independently variable characteristics: ordered wholeness, adaptive self-stabilization, adaptive self-organization, and hierarchical relationships. A natural system is uniquely defined by these characteristics. A system's ability to survive, grow, and interact is dependent on its adaptive character.

Natural systems exhibit ordered wholeness. "The concept of 'wholeness' defines the character of the system as such, in contrast to the character of its parts in isolation."¹ A whole possesses characteristics which are not possessed by its parts singly. The whole has an identity, function, and structure other than those which can be shown as attributed to the system as the simple summation of isolated parts. Wholes can be shown to be other than the simple sum of the properties and functions of their parts. Complexes of parts can be described in three distinct ways: first, by counting the number of parts; second, by taking into account the species to which the parts belong; and third, by considering the relations between the parts. The number and species of the parts can be considered as cumulative characteristics but relations between the parts affect identity, function, and structure in a non-cumulative way. Ordered wholeness provides for a system's uniqueness as a natural system.

¹Ervin Laszlo, Introduction to Systems Philosophy (New York: Gordon, 1972), p. 36.

A natural system should be understood as an ordered whole in relation to its relevant environment. If a system is entirely governed by fixed forces, the constant constraints these impose bring about an unchanging steady state. If, however, together with the fixed forces some other forces are present in the system, the system is capable of modification through the interplay of the forces present in, and acting on, it. "The presence of some fixed forces is sufficient to bring about a state which persists in time when all the flows in the system which correspond to the unrestrained forces vanish."² Any fluctuation in the system gives rise to forces that tend to bring it back to its stable configuration. Ordered wholes are always characterized by the pressure of fixed forces. These fixed forces create the system's unique identity, function, and structure. "Thus ordered wholes, by virtue of their characteristics, are self-stabilizing in, and around, steady states."³ Given variable forces introducing change which do not exceed their threshold of self-stabilization, they will tend to return to the enduring states prescribed by their constant constraints. Stable equilibrium in systems, i.e., the capacity of self-regulation by compensating for changing conditions in the environment through coordinate changes in the system's internal variables, is stated here as a form of adaptation by systems which are ordered wholes.

²Laszlo, p. 39.

³Ibid., p. 40.

Inasmuch as systems of this kind reorganize their structures and functions to buffer out or eliminate the change-inducing forces, they are adaptive entities. This is one form of adaptation in systems; not the only one. A more striking form of it, involving the reorganization of the fixed forces themselves, is discussed next.

It has been shown that ordered wholes tend to return to stable states following change-inducing forces in their surroundings. It is also possible to show that such systems reorganize their fixed forces and acquire new structures and functions when subjected to the action of a constant force in their environment. Natural systems in general go to ordered steady states. But most of a natural system's states are relatively unstable. So in going from any state to one of the steady ones, the system is going from a larger number of states to a smaller. In this way the system is performing a selection, in the purely objective sense it rejects some states, by leaving them, and retains some other state by sticking to it. The selection involves not merely the reestablishment of stability after a change in forces, but the progressive development of new steady states which are more resistant to the future changes than the former ones. It evolves to maximum resistance to change.⁴ A system organizes itself as a function of maximal resistance to the forces that act on it in its environment.

⁴Laszlo, p. 42.

The evolution of any arbitrary complex system is always in the direction of merging some characteristics, differentiating others, and developing partially autonomous subsystems in a hierarchical sequence.⁵

Here Laszlo shows that self-organization leads from relatively simple systems to more complex systems and that this process of complexification develops hierarchically organized sets of systems.

An adaptively reorganized system, however, is not necessarily a more stable system: adaptation is not synonymous with structural stability. An adapted system is optimally resistant to the kinds of forces which caused the process of self-organization; it is not thereby more resistant to all factors in its general environment. In fact, to the extent that adaptive self-organization occurs by means of a complexification of structure, the system becomes generally unstable and prone to disorganization. Its increased adaptive potential derives from its higher functional capacity, afforded by the greater degree of freedom of the higher organizational structure. Hence, systems evolve toward increasingly adapted, yet progressively unstable states, balancing their intrinsically unstable complex structure by a wider range of self-stabilizing functions.

Self-organization radically modifies the existing structure of a system and puts into question its continuing self-identity. The system adapts to its environment

⁵Laszlo, p. 43.

and, in the process, becomes a new system with new functional capabilities and structural configuration. And this process can not happen if the system is in isolation. The concept of self-organization introduces a view of reality that includes a population of systems rather than the self-organization of a single system. This allows for the interaction of complex systems as a necessary part of an evolutionary process. Interaction, in turn, involves the mutual affect of each system on the other, providing pressure to adapt and change in accordance with the new complex situation. Given a new complex situation, a system must adapt or risk eventual disorganization.

Given systems which constitute ordered wholes, adaptively stabilizing themselves in their environment around existing steady states as well as evolving themselves to more adapted states, development will be in the direction of increasing hierarchical structuration.⁶

Complex systems evolve from simple systems more rapidly if there are stable intermediate forms than if there are not. Any failure in the organization of a hierarchical form will not destroy the system as a whole, but will only disintegrate it to the next stable subsystem level. Then, instead of starting all over again, the process of complexification starts from this stable hierarchical level. Hierarchical systems evolve in response to the pressure of self-organization. It is more direct and, therefore, simpler

⁶Laszlo, p. 47.

for systems to cooperatively constitute higher systems than to do the whole job of complexification alone. Here simplicity is equal to efficiency and is measured by the time required for the process.

The concept of a natural hierarchy is an entailment of the concept of self-stabilization and of self-organization in common environments. "It suggests a vertical law of organization by deduction from horizontal laws of interaction."⁷ The concept of a hierarchy does not connote reductionism and is well able to account for the manifest diversity of functions and properties in reality. Fresh qualities can emerge in the hierarchy in the form of new transformations of existing properties. The possibilities of diversity of structure and function increase with the levels, and one need not reduce the typical characteristics of higher-level entities to those of lower levels. The concept allows for the type of structure in which the systems function as a whole on one level function as parts on the higher levels and where the parts of a system on any level are themselves wholes on a lower level. Hence, from the viewpoint of a specific system, there is an intra-systemic hierarchy of its structure-functional constitution, made up of the hierarchical levels of decreased complexity, and an intersystemic hierarchy consisting of structure-functional wholes of increased complexity. Any system can

⁷Laszlo, p. 49.

be seen to be situated at the intersection of the intra- and inter-systemic hierarchies and the number of levels apparent in each defines its specific position within the objective structure of observed reality.

To summarize, general systems theory provides a significant view of life as organized complexity. A natural system exhibits four characteristics: ordered wholeness, adaptive self-stabilization, adaptive self-organization, and hierarchical relationships. General systems theory, then, allows for the discussion of the dynamic interaction of a defined system in a continually changing environment.

Now I can propose a new paradigm for theological study from the systems perspective. This new paradigm must deal with human identity and the theological view of history. In addition, it must be sufficiently unprecedented in its understanding of human existence to attract an enduring group of adherents away from competing modes of theological order and it must be sufficiently open-ended to leave some problems for the contemporary theological community to resolve. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the explanation of the applicability of systems thought to directed theological reflection and study. The new paradigm derived from general systems theory is the following: human identity, at any defined time and place, is determined by participation in God's continuous activity of creating and sustaining natural systems. I will seek to

explain the distinctive view of history that this statement proposes first and then will approach the idea of identity in relation to that view of history.

History is viewed as a continuous drama in which natural systems are created and sustained. History is not seen to be meaningful if it only sustains that which has already been created. Also, it is not meaningful if it seeks only to participate in some future creation. From a systems perspective, history is meaningful and significant only if it is seen to be a dynamically adaptive response to a constantly changing environment. If history is a dynamically adaptive response to a constantly changing environment, then a systems approach to that view of history has a significant ability to explain this response.

Systems theory allows an entry at the basic level. It allows a discussion of ground rules for viewing creation as a dynamic natural system. Our world is diverse and interdependent. There is no such thing as an isolated part of the world. In this respect we can view the world as an ordered whole. The whole of the world has an identity, function, and structure other than those which can be attributed to the system as the simple summation of isolated parts. Ordered wholeness provides for a system's uniqueness as a natural system. Seeing the world as an ordered whole is necessary in this discussion to enable the further descriptions of the dynamics of natural systems to be

applied to the world. Within every system which is an ordered whole there are parts which are also ordered wholes in their own right. These parts interact in a particular manner described by the identity, function, and structure of the whole system. As described earlier, natural systems which are ordered wholes exhibit some remarkable characteristics which can be helpful in deriving and explaining some universal values in systems theory. The characteristics of adaptive self-stabilization, adaptive self-organization, and hierarchical relationships can be helpful in explaining the universal values in systems thought of life, progress, and justice. Ervin Laszlo proposes that, "all people everywhere strive to live, and to make some progress as a result of their lives, and to live in some balance with their fellow men."⁸ Except for the mentally ill and the criminally asocial among us, we are endowed with instincts and drives in all these areas. They appear in societies in more complex forms, as guarantees of minimum needs, as collective motivations engendered by desired objectives, and as judicial systems corresponding in some way to the sense of justice of individuals. But these values can be thwarted: millions can die of starvation, war, and untreated diseases; progressive social, economic, and political trends can suffer reverses, and arbitrary dictatorships can impose rules

⁸Ervin Laszlo, The Inner Limits of Mankind (New York: Pergamon Press, 1978), p. 57.

of terror and injustice. Given our interdependence, failure to attain conditions where life, progress, and justice are assured everywhere constitutes a threat to peace and fulfillment everywhere. A closer look at each of these universal values will show how history is a dynamically adaptive response to a constantly changing environment.

When a natural system is entirely governed by fixed forces, the constant constraints these impose bring about an unchanging steady state. Life can and should be understood as a steady state initiated and sustained by fixed forces. These fixed forces in the environment create a system's unique identity, function, and structure. In this respect, life is a stable equilibrium for a natural system. Life is seen as the capacity of self-regulation by compensating for changing conditions in the environment through coordinate changes in the system's internal variables. A system seeks to sustain its stable equilibrium existence by compensating for changing conditions in the environment. Life, then, from a systems perspective, is valued at all levels because it is the result of natural fixed forces interacting in an adaptive self-stabilization process.

History, therefore, can be understood, as in the Old Testament Wisdom tradition, as the sustaining of systems created in the past by the process of adaptive self-stabilization. Life seeks to sustain itself without moving from its steady state. In fact, life may end if that

steady state is lost. Here systems thought sees sustainability as a primary consideration in decision making for a system. Decisions should not be made if they endanger the sustainability of life as a steady state. That which has been created by the interaction of fixed and natural forces has a basic value and should be sustained. History is seen as a dynamically adaptive response to a constantly changing environment. One adaptive response is that of adaptive self-stabilization and is concerned with the sustainability of life.

It has been shown then that natural systems tend to return to stationary states following change-inducing forces in their surroundings. It is also possible to show that such systems reorganize their fixed forces and acquire new structures and functions when subjected to the action of a constant force in their environment. Progress should be understood as a reorganization process when a natural system is faced with a consistently changed environment. It involves not merely the reestablishment of stability after a change in forces, but the progressive development of new steady states which are more resistant to the future changes than the former ones. A system evolves to a maximum resistance to change. This is a process of complexification. Adaptive reorganization involves the creation of more complex systems which are, in fact, more resistant to change than the simpler systems. It does not, however,

involve the creation of a more stable system: adaptation is not synonymous with structural stability. As systems evolve toward greater complexity, responding to new challenges in the environment, they must widen their range of self-stabilizing functions. In other words, when life becomes more complex, a greater attention must be given to the subject of sustainability. On the one hand, the environment challenges the system to a more organized life and, on the other hand, threatens its life in the process.

History, then, can be understood, as in the post-exilic Old Testament and New Testament traditions, as the creation of new systems by the process of adaptive self-organization. Systems thought sees progress as another primary consideration in decision making for a system. Decisions should be made which increase the system's ability to withstand change. New systems, then, must be created which have more complex and inclusive adaptive abilities. History is seen as a dynamically adaptive response to a constantly changing environment. This adaptive response is that of adaptive self-organization and is concerned with the progressive development of new life which is more adaptive and therefore more resistant to future forces toward structural change. Progress, then, increases a system's ability to cope with change creatively.

Finally, through the processes of adaptive self-stabilization and adaptive self-organization, systems

develop in the direction of increasing hierarchical structuration. In other words, through the sustaining of life and the progressive development of more adaptive life, life comes into an increasing threat of injustice. This provides an understanding of the natural processes involved in the creation of injustice by well-meaning individuals interested in the sustaining of life and progress. Different systems progress at different rates and this provides a natural hierarchy in the macrosystem. Laszlo says, "Justice in the world community calls for increasing equity between poor and rich, powerless and powerful."⁹ Justice, then, is in a natural tension with sustainability and progress. Increased hierarchical structuration is a natural result of adaptive self-stabilization and adaptive self-organization but creates a potential for increased injustice.

History, then, should be understood as an ethical moment at the intersection of the past and the future, of adaptive self-stabilization and adaptive self-organization. Systems thought yields the ultimate consideration in decision making for a system to be justice. Decisions should be made ultimately which increase justice and equity. Sustainability is affirmed as the extension of past structures into the future. Progress is affirmed as the creation of a

⁹Laszlo, Inner Limits, p. 58.

new structure of existence in the future. But justice is affirmed as the ethical context in the present moment for these processes. From a systems perspective, history is meaningful and significant only if it is seen to be a dynamically adaptive response to a constantly changing environment and if it is done under the constant pressure of the ethical requirement of justice.

To summarize briefly, the systems' paradigm proposed here views history as a continuous process of creating and sustaining natural systems. Here God is active in history by sustaining life and providing the possibilities of progress but, more important, by producing a constant threat of injustice. History then is the context for ethical decisions. In addition, at every present moment there are ethical decisions to be made. Systems thought provides three ultimate values: sustainability, concerning creation; progress, concerning future creation; and justice, concerning ethical responsibility in the present moment.

The concept of identity can now be discussed as it relates to the reality of its experience. I have defined reality as having three components—theological, institutional, and historical. The historical and institutional components are included in discussions of human identity in some contemporary human science literature. The theological component must be added by the theologian because it cannot be approached by the tools available to the human sciences.

Erik Erikson defined reality: "The sense of ego identity is the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others."¹⁰ For Erikson, identity formation and maintenance are processes involving a constant interplay between the historical and institutional components of reality. There is a dynamic system which determines the identity. This system involves awareness of relationship, the passage of time, and a feedback capability which links these spatial and temporal components. The identity is in constant flux. Erikson adds,

While the end of adolescence is the stage of an overt identity crisis, identity formation neither begins nor ends with adolescence: it is a lifelong development largely unconscious to the individual and to his society.¹¹

The constant flux apparent in identity formation and maintenance is directly related to the flux apparent in objective and subjective reality. Both reality and identity, therefore, are ever changing as the historical and institutional components interact. Berger presents this dynamic interaction:

Identity is, of course, a key element of subjective reality, and like a subjective reality, stands in a dialectical relationship with society. Identity is

¹⁰Erik Homburger Erikson, Identity and Life Cycle (New York: International Universities Press, 1959), p. 89.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 113.

formed by social processes. Once crystalized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and the maintenance of identity are determined by the social structure. Conversely, the identities produced by the interplay of organisms, individual consciousness and social structure, maintaining it, modifying it, or even reshaping it.¹²

It has been assumed, to summarize briefly, that reality and identity share some of the same dynamics in the historical and institutional contexts. Theologically, it can be extrapolated that there must be a theological component in a proper understanding of reality and identity. Reality and identity should be seen to have an eternal significance. When this eternal significance is accepted as part of one's identity, the dynamics of that identity are changed. The resulting identity shows evidence of historical and institutional interaction but also shows evidence of theological input. Therefore, the identity which is seen to have historical, institutional, and theological components will never be totally understood by the human sciences which are restricted to discussion of only the historical and institutional components. This does in no way nullify the importance of the human sciences in understanding reality and identity but should put them in a more appropriate perspective. This assumption does place a great burden on the theological community to provide this understanding which it alone can give.

¹²Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 159.

Now it is possible to describe the discontinuity of reality called crisis. First we can develop this notion with the historical and institutional components and then add the theological component. Berger sees crisis as a reality problem.

It is convenient to distinguish between two general types of reality-maintenance—routine maintenance and crisis maintenance. The former is designed to maintain the internalized reality in everyday life and the latter in situations of crisis. Both entail fundamentally the same social processes. . . .¹³

Routine reality-maintenance involves the constant interplay of the historical and institutional components of reality covered earlier which makes minor adjustments in reality awareness. Crisis reality-maintenance involves this interaction of the components of reality the same as in routine maintenance, except that the reality confirmations have to be more explicit and intensive. Berger notes that when the significant others and "chorus" disagree with the person about subjective reality, that person can accept failure as a person or "has the option of downgrading some of these people from their status of significant others and turning instead to others for his significant reality-confirmations."¹⁴ Routine maintenance requires less change in the person's reality system than crisis maintenance. The key here is that the crisis presents a discontinuity in reality which is more serious than a routine discontinuity but also should be

¹³Berger and Luckmann, p. 137.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 139.

understood as having some basic similarities. Reality-maintenance in a crisis situation is not radically different from reality-maintenance in a routine daily life. Therefore, any attempt to deal with crises must rely on the strength of the person's routine reality-maintenance process. As Berger pointed out, the process must be more explicit and intensive when a crisis arises. This makes one observation necessary here: a reality-maintenance process which is not operative in routine daily maintenance cannot be relied on for crisis reality-maintenance.

This brings us to the topic of ritual. Ritual is important for Berger in defining reality-maintenance in routine or crisis situations.

Frequently, ritual techniques are brought into play. While the individual may improvise reality-maintaining procedures in the face of crisis, the society itself sets up specific procedures for situations recognized as involving the risk of a breakdown in reality.¹⁵

Margaret Mead agrees, while not approaching routine reality-maintenance per se:

Throughout human history man has employed ritual behavior to deal with critical moments. Which moments are thought of as most critical will vary from society to society. . . .¹⁶

Ritual develops as the need arises, it seems—a matter of demand and supply. This need for ritual is seen in the

¹⁵Berger and Luckmann, p. 143.

¹⁶Margaret Mead, "Ritual and Social Crisis," in James D. Shaughnessy (ed.), The Roots of Ritual (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 89.

commonness of the crisis in society.

The essence of ritual, then, is bringing the same ritual to a particular critical event of previous experience. So, in a ritual treatment of death, for example, each death is related to all the other deaths to which those present have related before.¹⁷

This common treatment of a common crisis gives the situation a continuity in a time of severe discontinuity of reality. Mead is quite sure on this point: "Ritual has no efficacy without continuity."¹⁸

This brings about a progression of thought which is very significant. There appears to be a link between reality, identity, ritual, and crisis. Ritual provides valuable input in reality and identity dynamics. Hans Mol helps in this expression.

Rites represent sameness in action and thereby consolidate the sameness of a system of meaning. They restore, reinforce, or redirect identity. They restore, through recommitting to memory, a system of meaning, through reabsorbing individuals in the common fabric, and through confessions of sins of omission and commission. They reinforce through superimposing the constraint of social expectations, through linking the past to the present, through filling the emotional voids of instrumental, rational existence. They redirect through surrounding stressful situations with emotional support, through desacralizing an old identity, and through sacralizing a new one.¹⁹

Ritual provides continuity and order for reality and identity, in routine situations and in crisis situations. It gives confirmation of relationships in the historical component

¹⁷Mead, p. 90.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁹Hans J. Mol, Identity and the Sacred (New York: Free Press, 1977), pp. 244-5.

and continuity with the past in the institutional component.

Thus human identity is restored, reinforced and re-directed by rituals. I propose here that the natural systems defining everyday life are the rituals that determine identity. And because these systems are rituals, we have the responsibility to participate in their restoration, reinforcement, and redirection. The systems' paradigm then relates human identity directly to the values of sustainability, progress, and justice. Human identity is meaningful when it participates in God's activity which is continuous in history and God's activity is involved in sustaining life in all forms, creating new life where appropriate, and providing these under the constant ethical requirement of justice. The systems' paradigm then provides an unprecedented understanding of human existence. It affirms the past and future as significant but recognizes the ethical decisions of the present moment as being the most significant factors in the meaning of the human identity. It gives neither an existential nor an eschatological view of history but what I see to be a uniquely systems view of history.

Chapter 5

CONTEMPORARY PARISH MINISTRY

This final chapter addresses the tensions and potentials of contemporary parish ministry. To this end I will first propose that the pastoral function in parish ministry is involved in doing normal theology. Next I will discuss the critical-prophetic function of parish ministry as being involved in doing extraordinary theology. Parish ministry then can be understood to have a natural tension at times of theological crisis. When this natural tension is understood, it can be affirmed as a necessary and creative part of parish ministry in crisis situations. Then I intend to discuss the forms in contemporary parish ministry with special emphasis on liturgical form as a potentially effective form for dealing with theological crises.

It seems most appropriate to understand the pastoral function in parish ministry as being involved in doing normal theology. This pastoral ministry can definitely be seen as being based on past theological understandings, understandings that are acknowledged by the denominational community for a time as supplying the foundations for its further practice. These understandings are recounted in the denominational texts. The United Methodist Church, for

example, is said to be a denomination with four specific texts—the Bible, the Discipline of the United Methodist Church, the United Methodist Book of Worship, and the United Methodist Hymnal.¹ These texts expound the body of accepted order and law, illustrate many successful applications, and propose new applications with verifiable observations. Those theological understandings which serve to define the legitimate problems and methods of a theological community for succeeding generations are the theological paradigms. The study of the appropriate paradigms at a seminary is what prepares the student for ministry with the information needed to practice normal theology with a particular theological community. Those whose study and reflection are based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for theological practice. That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal theology. Pastoral ministry exhibits such commitment and apparent consensus within denominational lines.

Theological paradigms are objects for further articulation and specification within the parish setting. This generally occurs at least once a week in the sermon. Denominations gain converts because their paradigms are more successful than their competitors in solving the

¹Richard W. Cain, Polity class lecture, Claremont, California, February 1980.

problems which are seen to be of great importance. Success here is not complete solution of a single problem or even partial solution of many problems. The success of a paradigm, thus also for a denomination, is a promise of solution, realizable in selected and still incomplete examples. Pastoral ministry is involved in normal theology because it seeks to fulfill that promise, a fulfillment through extending the knowledge of reality that the paradigm reveals, through increasing the extent of the match between that revealed reality and the paradigm's predictive potential, and through further articulation of the paradigm itself.

As in normal theology, no part of the aim of the pastoral function of ministry is to call forth new modes of human experience; indeed those that will not fit into the paradigmatic box are often not accepted to even exist. Pastoral ministry is directed to the articulation of those modes of existence and theologies that the paradigm already supplies.

Pastoral ministry then seems to be interested in the three basic activities of normal theology—determination of reality, matching of reality with theological understanding, and articulation of these theological understandings. There are extraordinary problems also. But they emerge only on special occasions and only when normal pastoral ministry has prepared the way. Inevitably, therefore, the

overwhelming majority of questions undertaken even by the very best ministers usually fall into one of these three categories. Ministry under the paradigm can be conducted in no other way, and to desert the paradigm is to cease to practice ministry as it is defined.

Pastoral ministry is also involved in normal theology in its puzzle-solving interest. One of the things a theological community acquires with a paradigm is a criterion for choosing problems that, while the paradigm is taken for granted, can be assumed to have solutions. For the most part, these are the only problems that the community will admit as theologically relevant or encourage its members to undertake. Also there are rules that govern the pastoral function in parish ministry. These can be defined in the Discipline or can be an established viewpoint or preconception of how the pastoral function is practiced. Pastoral ministry must also be concerned with understanding the world and extending the precision and scope with which it has been ordered. This leads the minister to a local parish setting rather than to an academic setting. That commitment leads the minister to scrutinize some specific aspect of reality in great detail and to apply the knowledge of the paradigm to a specific group at a certain place. In the parish ministry, the minister as pastor is challenged to speak the Good News of the paradigm in constantly changing situations.

This brings me to the subject of revolution in the theological community. Revolution commences with the awareness of anomaly or crisis—with the recognition that reality and human experience has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal theology. When a crisis arises, it continues until it is actively resolved. Here is an essential point: crisis only appears against the background provided by the paradigm. The more precise and far-reaching that paradigm is, the more sensitive an indicator it provides of crisis and hence of an occasion for paradigm change. In this sense, pastoral ministry provides the environment of reflection and study which ultimately brings the awareness of a crisis. Effective pastoral ministry makes a crisis apparent and directs the people's attention to the resolution of that crisis. Ineffective parish ministry doesn't even see the crisis so the people have no possibility of resolving the crisis. It appears when change is impossible and is very destructive to the theological community.

The pastoral function in ministry is totally committed to the shared paradigm and tends to resist change in that paradigm. This characteristic of pastoral ministry is helpful in a theological revolution. By ensuring that the paradigm will not be easily surrendered, resistance guarantees that the ministry will not be lightly distracted and that the anomalies that lead to paradigm change will

penetrate existing understandings completely. The pastoral function presents the minister as the institutional representative to the local parish. This means that the minister is seen as God's representative to the local parish for the purpose of creating and sustaining order and harmony in the Church and in society. The pastoral function in ministry provides an understanding of human existence in the shared paradigm and resists attempts to understand existence by competing paradigms.

To summarize briefly, pastoral ministry should be understood as doing normal theology. It is based on past theological understandings. Pastoral ministry is a puzzle-solving activity, in which the puzzle is supplied by the paradigm. When a crisis arises, pastoral ministry tends to resist a change of paradigms. The minister here is the protector of the existing paradigm and hence is seen to be the institutional representative to the local parish.

Next, critical-prophetic ministry can be discussed. Critical-prophetic ministry should be understood as extraordinary theology. It emerges as a response to anomaly or crisis. It begins within the context of an existing paradigm and affirms that paradigm until an alternate paradigm is accepted to take its place. Then critical-prophetic ministry seeks to broaden theological discussion. Early attacks upon a resistant problem follow the paradigm but later the rules become increasingly blurred. Finally,

critical-prophetic ministry is involved in the resolution of the crisis.

Critical-prophetic ministry presupposes a crisis, which is a discontinuity in reality. Some phenomenon violates the paradigm-induced expectations and radically changes the climate in the theological community. There is no doubt that such a crisis has a deep affect on the identity of that theological community as it is forced to reevaluate its fundamental beliefs. There is the danger of a total loss of uniqueness in this situation. For the theological community to move too quickly would mean it may simply be fragmented rather than meeting the crisis with unity of purpose to resolve the crisis together. This is the reason that critical-prophetic ministry first affirms the existing paradigm. It is this shared paradigm that provides unity of purpose and maintains the identity of the community.

Within such a climate, the critical-prophetic ministry then seeks to expand the discussion of theological matters to encompass the anomalous situation, if possible. Extraordinary theology aims to resolve the crisis—it doesn't feel the compulsion to do so through revolution in every case. The resolution which would change the existing paradigm the least would be the best resolution. So critical-prophetic ministry proceeds in the resolution of the crisis, trying the simplest solutions first but always testing the appropriateness of each potential resolution.

Only as a last resort does the critical-prophetic ministry propose a radical departure from the existing paradigm structure. Theological revolution is not worth the trouble if the crisis can be resolved within the existing paradigm. Having tried every other path of resolution, critical-prophetic ministry finally seeks a radically new paradigm to direct future theological study. The tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic functions, to this point, may have been very slight, but with proposal of a new paradigm and the ensuing debate over its acceptance, it grows to be part of theological life. As the exponents of a new way of understanding life, critical-prophetic ministers preach to gain converts, using every method of mass persuasion available.

To summarize, critical-prophetic ministry aims to resolve the crisis that caused its emergence. It seeks that resolution in the ways that would cause the least identity damage for the theological community first. It only proposes a radical form of resolution when it has been shown to be absolutely necessary. Then, and only then, the critical-prophetic function must stand apart from the pastoral function and seek converts from the community to accept the new paradigm.

Contemporary parish ministry operates in a crucial time in history. The survival of life as we know it is seriously threatened. This provides an anomaly for those who have placed their faith in progress and technological

advances to produce solutions to the global shortages. The eschatological view of history has been incorporated into many parts of life and in many forms. I propose in this project that it has contributed significantly to the widening gap between the rich and poor, the powerful and powerless. The evidence in the chapter on systems theory proves this point. The existing theological paradigm, therefore, has contributed to the problems we are facing today. To this point, I have addressed this project.

Given this historical and institutional situation, contemporary parish ministry must operate creatively and must maintain the Christian identity in the process. Critical-prophetic ministry emerges in times of crises to resolve them. It must emerge today to deal with the serious problem facing the global community. It seems that the theological community has been involved in extraordinary theology for years now. New theologies are proposed for special interests because the traditional theology does not explain human existence in its new complexities adequately. There is Black Theology, Feminist Theology, Liberation Theology, etc. This appears to be the process of breaking down the rules of theological study and reflection and expansion of theology in different directions. None of these, however, have produced a paradigm which really deals with the problems of justice and sustainability for the global community.

The next stage in extraordinary theology is the proposal of a radical new paradigm. But this will create a situation of conflict in the theological community. This conflict is a natural part of theological development but it is still painful. My major concern is in the area of parish ministry. A global perspective leads to a critical-prophetic function in contemporary parish ministry. The tension will be most painful for those involved in parish ministry who have been called to both the pastoral and the critical-prophetic functions of ministry.

The pastoral function of parish ministry is a puzzle-solving activity. The critical-prophetic ministry is a crisis-resolution activity. Both seek to provide order in the midst of a changing world. The critical-prophetic function sees the need for a new puzzle-solving aim and method. The synthesis of the pastoral and the critical-prophetic functions of parish ministry must come in the area of basic human need for the Good News. A new normal theology must solve the puzzles that human experience constantly faces—the common life crises—as well as resolving the theological paradigm crisis. Normal theology, in the form of pastoral ministry, is responsible for the maintenance of individual identity as well as the identity of the theological community. Attention to common life crises in the parish setting has the possibility of creating a situation in which the tension between the pastoral and critical-prophetic functions is accepted and actually

seen to be a creative part of parish ministry. A parish minister who does not attend to the needs of the local parish in the normal activity of pastoral care will not be effective in any form of critical-prophetic ministry. In short, the synthesis of the pastoral and the critical-prophetic functions of parish ministry depends on the effective ministry to those experiencing common life crises. Given the existence of critical-prophetic ministry, it is done with a minimum of tension when proper pastoral care is provided.

The various forms of parish ministry—preaching, counseling, teaching, etc.—are shaped by the paradigm that directs theological reflection and study. Each are expressions of the theologian's understanding of the paradigm, of reality, and of the interface between them. The systems' paradigm proposes a view of human existence that is characterized as responding to a constantly changing environment. This brings ministry to be particularly sensitive to the common discontinuities involved in everyday life. The ability to cope with these discontinuities makes survival possible for a person's sense of identity. Particularly at times of historical crises, the maintenance of identity is of primary importance. Some discontinuity causes pressure for change as adaptive self-organization. Major discontinuities cause a loss of the ability to adapt at all. The pastoral function is responsible for the maintenance of identity so that identity can be reorganized

creatively rather than simply being destroyed.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of a particular form of parish ministry as it deals with the maintenance of identity. I will use liturgical form as an example of appropriate parish ministry in a time of crisis.

The shape or structure of worship provides some valuable insights into the dynamics of it as a ritual capable of helping in identity maintenance. The dynamic quality of the ritual in worship causes it to function effectively in crisis resolution. Dom Gregory Dix has given some information on the dynamics of Eucharistic worship.

The last supper of our Lord with his disciples is the source of the liturgical eucharist, but not the model for its performance. The New Testament accounts of that supper as they stand in the received text present us with what may be called a "seven-action scheme" of the rite then inaugurated. Our Lord (1) took bread; (2) "gave thanks" over it; (3) broke it; (4) distributed it, saying certain words. Later He (5) took the cup; (6) "gave thanks" over that; (7) handed it to his disciples, saying certain words. We are so accustomed to the liturgical shape of the eucharist as we know it that we do not appreciate the fact that it is not based in practice on this "seven-action scheme" but on a somewhat drastic modification of it. With absolute unanimity the liturgical tradition reproduces these seven actions as four: (1) the offertory; bread and wine are "taken" and placed on the table together. (2) the prayer; the president gives thanks to God over the bread and wine together. (3) The fraction; the bread is broken. (4) The communion; the bread and wine are distributed together.²

²Gregory Dix, The Shape of the Liturgy (Westminster, Maryland: Dacre, 1945), p. 48.

Here Dix proposes a four-part scheme for understanding the Eucharist. He sees this pattern to be at the heart of liturgy throughout the history of the Church. It is my assumption that Dix has captured an important structure in the Eucharist but has failed to see its full importance. He fails to see that the difference between the "seven-action scheme" and the four-action scheme is a result of a shift in understanding of the Eucharist. I propose that the four-action scheme which has prevailed in the Church's ritual is not based on the New Testament account at all but is based on a totally different understanding. There appears to be only two major parts to the actual Eucharist: (1) an affirmation of the presence of God and (2) the communion.

The first major part of the Eucharist is a faith statement concerning the presence of God in the ritual. There are three divisions here in accordance with Dix:

- (a) the offertory—preparation of the Lord's table;
- (b) the prayer—the presider gives thanks to God for the sacrifice of Christ on the cross; and (c) the fraction—the bread is broken. Each of these divisions must be seen individually.

The offertory prepares the Lord's table. This part of the ritual places the emphasis on experiencing God's presence in everyday life. We are invited to share life with God. The sharing of a meal with special friends is a high point for most people. Likewise, the sharing of

the Lord's table is a symbol of God's desire to participate in life with us.

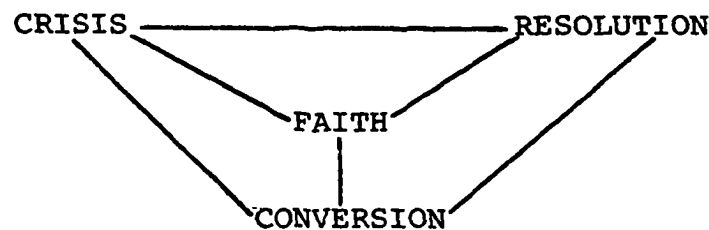
The prayer is offered to God to express our gratitude for the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sakes. The emphasis here is on sacrifice and atonement. This is a definite shift from the sense of excitement in the offertory. Here we are faced with our own finitude and ultimate death. But, God is present in the sacrifice of the cross. God showed a willingness to share in our deaths in the sacrifice of Christ.

The fraction is the breaking of the bread. Dix is correct in seeing this part of the Eucharist as coming from the New Testament account of the Lord's supper but fails to see a more significant "breaking of bread." The resurrected Christ is "recognized" by the disciples of Emmaus in the breaking of bread (Luke 24.30-31). The fraction, therefore, appears to emphasize the resurrection appearances of Christ. God is present in the resurrection.

When these divisions are seen in this manner, they give three unique experiences of God's presence. God is present in the life (offertory), death (prayer), and resurrection (fraction) of Christ. This understanding shows the focus to be the presence of God. There are three ways that this presence has been expressed in the scriptural accounts and each has a unique relevance. This first part of the Eucharist, therefore, is a faith statement concerning the presence of God.

The second major part of the Eucharist is the communion. Here the bread and the wine are distributed to those who have faith in God's presence. The communion provides for participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and provides an understanding of the integrity of life with God. Communion provides order and continuity in one's relationship with God and creation. It is this sense of continuity that Margaret Mead sees as necessary for any ritual to be effective.

But this structure is not enough in our attempt to see the ritual of Eucharistic worship in a crisis resolution role. I propose the diagram below as one model for understanding the dynamic possibilities in worship.



This diagram was developed originally as a representation of an ethical problem-solving method but seems to translate well in explaining worship as a crisis resolution ritual. The central and controlling factor of the system is faith. The model draws its dynamic character from this factor as it acts as the "hub" to a constantly moving crisis resolution method. This structure provides an organic approach to worship. There is an inner

consistency in the dependence on faith as the basis of hope. Within this structure, faith is the thread which draws the other parts together and makes them meaningful. The boundary factors, crisis, conversion, and resolution, then, participate in the structure to give expression to the faith which is the heart of the worship experience. This boundary structure is fashioned to evidence the flux inherent in reality. The cyclic nature of reality is shown in the interactions between crisis, conversion, and resolution. It is not possible to describe one of these factors without a description of the other two and ultimately of faith as it relates to the whole boundary system. For example, when we chose to talk about conversion, we are required to discuss what it is that needs conversion and why it needs conversion. This discussion must also include what changes the conversion will provide and why the resolution state will be "better" than the crisis state. Conversion, apart from crisis and resolution, is meaningless. In addition, conversion, apart from faith, is impossible.

The model for worship in the diagram above provides the basis for the order of worship below. It has seven parts, each giving meaning to the others and none having the ability to stand alone.

1. Statements of faith (I)
2. Awareness of crisis
3. Statements of faith (II)
4. Conversion
5. Statements of faith (III)
6. Resolution
7. Statements of faith (IV)

Here it can be seen that faith is the central factor in worship. The inner factor in the crisis resolution model becomes the dominant structural component of the order of worship. Likewise, the boundary factors in the model become the subordinated components of the order of worship. Further discussion of this basic order of worship can be conducted in comparison with another order of worship which shows a parallel form. The order of worship developed by the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) will enable such a discussion. The diagram below provides a comparison of the two forms.

System Order	COCU Order
1. Statements of faith	The Greeting Act of Praise Act of Penitence The Bidding
2. Awareness of crisis	Confession of Sin
3. Statements of faith	Declaration of Pardon
4. Conversion	Old Testament Lesson Hymn or Psalm New Testament Lesson Hymn or Psalm The Gospel The Sermon
5. Statements of faith	Affirmation of Faith The Peace The Prayers The Offertory The Thanksgiving The Breaking of Bread
6. Resolution	The Communion
7. Statements of faith	Act of Praise Dismissal

Part 1 of the system's order of worship proposes an understanding of faith which focuses on God as evident at all times in history. Many worship experiences open with a psalm or hymn which seeks to prove God's existence with statements about the natural world. "Our approach to God in worship is always one of awe and expectation."³ Our faith is presented as faith in a "great" God; we approach the infinite in worship. The appeal to nature is an effective way of creating a sense of humility and smallness in our relationship to God—we are small in relation to creation so we must also be small in relation to the Creator. The worship experience, then, is opened with a statement or statements of our relationship to God and creation. We praise God and sense our smallness. This view of reality is basically synchronic so can be seen as operating primarily in the historical component of reality.

Part 2 presents the human situation as crisis. Human existence is characterized as continuous discontinuity. We find ourselves separated from ourselves, others, and God and this separation is experienced as sin. This part of the worship experience gives expression to the perpetual situation of separation that is common to all humans. Since crisis can be understood as a discontinuity of reality, the confession of sin operates to make us aware of crises.

³Consultation on Church Union, An Order of Worship (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1968), p. 44.

Part 3 responds to crisis confessed in Part 2. The Declaration of Pardon proposes the belief that it is God's nature to be forgiving and accepting. Pardon is pronounced out of a knowledge of God's identity. It can be seen also that this knowledge of God's identity can be gained only through experience which implies the passage of time. This statement of faith, then, is basically diachronic. It operates primarily in the institutional component of reality.

Part 4 proposes conversion as the natural result of a human confrontation with the identity of God. The knowledge of God's identity brings about a transformation. The transformation occurs when a person is confronted by the Word of God. Part 4 of the worship experience focuses on the Word which is read to the congregation and is explained and applied in the sermon. Conversion should be seen as the transformation caused by the Word. This transformation takes place in the context of crisis and is the result of the confrontation between the inconsistencies of human existence and the eternal consistencies of God's identity.

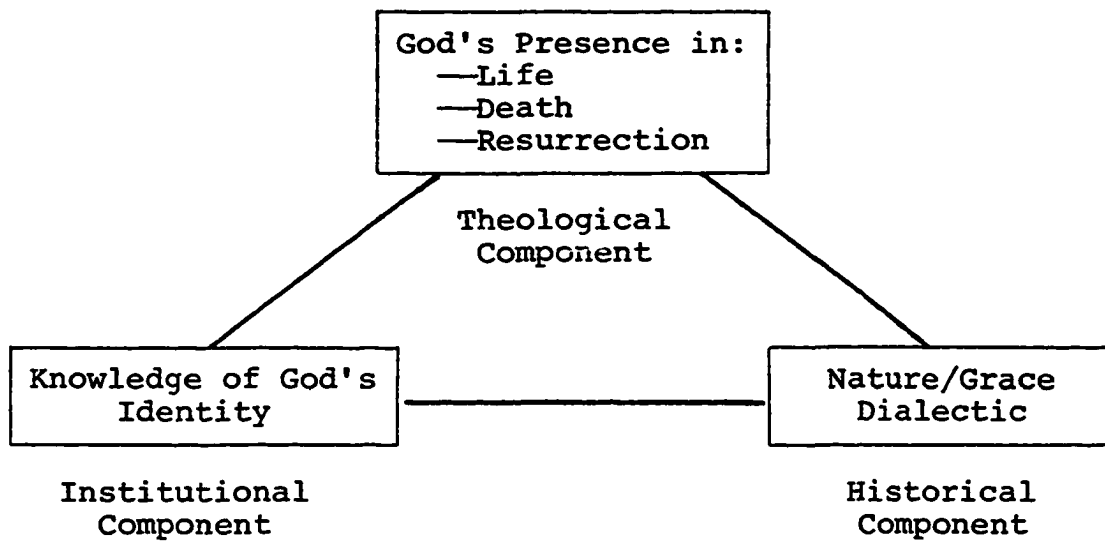
Part 5 shows another understanding of faith. Faith is presented here as the belief that this transforming identity of God is present and active. The affirmation of faith operates as an internal summary of the preceding parts. The Peace and Prayers presuppose God's active presence in and for the congregation. The Offertory, Thanksgiving, and Breaking of the Bread present different theological understandings of God's presence. I use the

information drawn from Dix earlier to explain their significance. Part 5 presents a faith in God's presence in all human situations without regard to any restrictions of time or space. This statement of faith, as a whole, operates primarily in the theological component of reality for it is neither synchronic nor diachronic.

Part 6 completes the crisis resolution model begun in the awareness of crisis. Here human existence is brought into communion with God's ever-present identity. This communion resolves our separation from God and gives hope for resolution of other separations. Communion provides order in the midst of chaos, continuity in the midst of discontinuity, light in the midst of darkness. Crisis resolution comes through the radical transformation of human existence caused by God's loving presence.

Part 7 of the system's order of worship focuses again on the relationship between humanity and God. God is praised for being present in human existence when that presence is completely undeserved. Faith in God's grace is seen to be the final statement in the worship experience. This statement of faith operates again in the historical component of reality. The worship experience becomes a full circle then as it begins and ends in the historical component of reality.

Faith, therefore, can be understood as having historical, institutional, and theological components. The diagram below summarizes this understanding.

FAITH:

The institutional and theological components have been adequately explained. The historical component was appropriated from Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr proposes in Nature and Destiny of Man:

Human history is rooted in the natural process but it is something more than either the determined sequences of natural causation or the capricious variations of occurrences of the natural world—it is compounded of natural necessity and human freedom.⁴

For Niebuhr, human history, like the individual, has certain undeniable limitations placed on it by natural processes but can also transcend these natural processes. The historical component of reality, then, proposes faith as evident in nature and grace in a dialectic relationship.

⁴Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), II, 1.

This completes my discussion of the shape of Eucharistic worship. It is my belief that regular Eucharistic worship is an appropriate ritual for the purpose of providing continuity in reality and identity. This ritual can help to bridge the gap between the pastoral and the critical-prophetic functions in parish ministry. It provides continuity for the maintenance of the identity and provides a context for instituting a new paradigm understanding. This form also has the capability of providing an on-going problem-solving system. At the heart of worship, the Eucharist can present the Presence of God as being interested in the resolution of crises. This is an important concept and is completely supported by the systems' paradigm. Parish ministry can take on a whole new dynamic when viewed as a problem-solving system.

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